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his Wild West cruise, and this morning was Billy's birthday. He was now twenty-one years old!

"There is no mistake about it, Billy," assured his mother, with her pleasant smile. "You are of age to-day, and a man. But, you know it well enough, for this is the day you have been looking forward to."

It was early morning, and mother and son had just met at the breakfast table, together with Roger Watts, who was still "one of the family."

Many changes had taken place, and we find Billy in a new home. He had taken a flat in a good neighborhood, furnished it nicely, and installed his happy mother there.

The old place and the old life had been left behind forever, and Mrs. Weston, proud and content in the love of her son, declared herself to be the happiest woman in the world. Greeting Billy on this morning with his usual birthday kiss, she had made a remark that led to the quotation with which our story opens.

"Low me ter congrattyle ye, too, me son," cried the old ranger. "It ain't s'prisin' that ye don't feel no different bein' a man this mornin', for ye have been a man fer some time past, I take et. Hang me, if you don't look every inch a man, too, even if thar ain't no whiskers yet. Billy, I'm proud of ye, and I hev been proud of ye ever sence I first seen ye."

"And he is a boy to be proud of, too, Mr. Watts," averred Mrs. Weston.

"Course he is," rejoined the ranger. "An' he's a man, ma'm; not a boy. But, then, you're his mar, and he would be your boy jest ther same, even if he was forty-one. That's natur'."

"You are right, Mr. Watts; he will always be my boy. I wish every mother had one just like him, too. He is a good boy, has always been a good boy; and a good boy cannot fail of making a good man. I am proud of my Billy."

Billy stood blushing like a rose.

"Let up, mom!" he pleaded, "or you will spoil me, and then I won't be so good. If there is any good in me, Rover, it was mom, here, that made it. She's a mother to be proud of, I tell you. I knew what she said was so, every time, and I followed her advice."

"Good for you, me son."

"There, now, Billy, there, now, the mother admonished. "I won't say any more about ye. Come, let's get at our breakfast before it gets cold."

And so they sat down to the inviting repast. Let us take a brief glance backward.

Billy and "Skinny," so long partners at the old corner stand, had passed that business over to a younger brother of Skinny's, and together had taken a store.

It was chiefly Billy's money which went into the enterprise, Skinny giving his time and experience to offset. From the start this store had scored a success, and its prosperity was assured.

Skinny was fatter than ever, yet the same old Skinny in spirit, and he, like Billy, had removed his mother and the rest of the family to better quarters than they had ever before enjoyed. Everything was well with them all, and the future looked bright.

Billy had rented an office on Broadway—no other thoroughfare would do for him, he had declared; intending on this, his twenty-first birthday, to hang out his shingle and open for business as a full-fledged detective. He had received encouragement from many sources, and there was every reason to believe he would be successful in the field he liked so well. Anyhow, he meant to try it.

Our first notice of Broadway Billy was when, as a lad of seventeen, he performed his initial piece of detective work that was really worthy of record. Previous to that, for some time, he had in many ways proved himself useful to the police and detectives, and the dream of his life—the goal of his ambition, had been to become a detective himself and win the confidence of the chief of the Metropolitan force.

Following him step by step, through his principal adventures, we have seen him gain his desires. He served an apprenticeship that rivaled the record of many a professional, risking his life many times and having any number of narrow escapes, so was well qualified for the business he was about to undertake.

While the meal was progressing, and while the three were busily talking, there came a ring at the bell.

"That's Skinny, I'll bet on it!" exclaimed Billy at once; and rising from the table he pulled the wire that would open the outer door to the caller.

A moment later a heavy and slow step was

heard on the stairs; then came a tap at the door and Billy, ready to open it, admitted the fat partner into the room in all his rotundity.

"Great ginger!" Skinny cried, "you look just the same as you did yesterday, Billy. Why, I expected to see a man here."

"Sweet pertaters!" retorted Billy, as heartily, in his boyish way; "give me half a chance, won't you? Give me time to raise a mustache and a pair of chops, and then I'll show ye."

Both laughed, and Skinny congratulated Billy upon his having arrived at the important age that entitled him to take part in the affairs of his country.

Skinny was urged to partake of breakfast, but declined, saying he had just had his, so he sat down and waited until Billy finished. Then, after some talk, the two young men took their leave.

Both went to the store, where Billy's presence was needed upon a matter of business. Skinny was acknowledged manager here:—already he had two clerks under his charge, and there he can be seen any day. After attending to the business, Billy went on to his office.

At the main door of the great office building, he tore down a square of paper that was tacked up, disclosing a new and neatly painted sign bearing his name.

"WILLIAM WESTON,
Private Detective.
Room 20."

A flush mounted to his face as he looked at this for a moment—a flush caused by mingled pride and modesty; then he sprung up the stairs to the second floor, and when he came in sight of the door of Room 20 he discovered a boy sitting patiently before it on a bootblack's box.

He was a sturdy-looking little fellow, a lad of fifteen, short of stature and strong of limb, and his face, clean and shiny as soap and water could make it, was bright and intelligent. He was rather good-looking, as boys go, with black hair and eyes, but was clad in a suit that evidently had seen hard service.

The lad rose as Billy appeared in sight, and with a single movement his box was transferred from the floor to his shoulder.

"Hello!" exclaimed Billy, at sight of him, "you are on hand, I see, Harry."

"You bet!" was the exclamation. "It's bound to be a cold day when Happy Harry don't keep his p'intments, Mr. Weston."

Yet again did that flush mount to Billy's cheeks. In this lad he saw himself as he had been—it seemed only yesterday, and yet he was called "Mr. Weston." But, he realized that it was all right.

"That is right, Harry," he approved. "Punctuality is one of the mainsprings of success. That is to say, never fail to connect, unless you are in a difficulty and can't get there. If you make that rule, your friends will know something is wrong when you don't turn up."

"That's just the kind of a warbler I am," the lad declared. "When I say I'll be there, you can set it down fer a fact that I'm going to be if the wheels stay on. When you said you wanted to see me this mornin', and asked me ter be here at nine, sharp, and I said I would, that settled it. I was here before the clock stopped strikin'."

"Well, we will go into the office, and then I will tell you what I wanted to see you for."

"All right; I'm your daffodil."

The upper half of the door was of ground glass, and here another sheet of paper was fastened.

This Billy tore down, revealing another sign handsomely lettered on the glass:

"WILLIAM WESTON,
Private Detective."

"Office Hour—9 A. M." "If not in, drop note."

Billy unlocked the door and he and the boy entered.

A neatly furnished office was disclosed, one which did not savor too strongly of newness, either, since Billy had bought the carpet and some of the furniture from the previous occupant.

The carpet was a neat one, though a little worn. The desk was a good one, large, roomy, and somewhat dignified. The rest of the furniture was substantial and necessary. There were two windows, with curtains.

Billy closed the door and looked around him with the air of one who was monarch of all he surveyed.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed under his

breath, "I wouldn't 'a' believed it if mom herself had told me. Is it possible this is you, Willyum?"

His pause was only momentary, and he crossed the floor and sat down at the desk, at the same time inviting his young friend to help himself to a chair, which the boy promptly did.

"Now, Harry Hillyard, we will come to business at once," Billy opened. "You are a boy I have had my eye on for some time, and I think I can make use of you, if you are willing, and put you in the way of making more money than you are making now. Do you want to work for me?"

"Want ter work fer ye? Mr. Weston, you jest say you want me and I'll stand on my head on my box and kick the flies off the ceiling! Do I want ter work fer you? Well, I should warble! I have read about all your doin's, and I've made up my mind that I'm goin' ter foller right after ye and see if I can't be a detective, too—one of the get-up-and-go-it-fer-all-ye-ar'-worth kind."

"Well, I think there is good stuff in you," acknowledged Billy, earnestly, "and I'm going to see how you will pan out."

CHAPTER II.

BILLY'S FIRST VISITOR.

HARRY HILLYARD, or "Happy Harry," as he was better known on the street, was a boy whose acquaintance Billy had made some time previous.

Billy had been on the lookout for just such a boy-adjudant.

Entering the lists, now, as a professional, he wanted some one to take up the role he was laying down; that was, to be the boy detective he had been himself, and in looking around for such a lad, had found this one, who, at a glance, he believed would "fill the bill," admirably, and so, on the day previous to this, his birthday, Billy had requested the gamin to come to the office at nine in the morning.

"You told me you have neither father or mother, didn't you? That being the case you haven't any home, I take it."

"No home? All New York is my home, Mr. Weston. In cold weather I sleep at the lodgin'-house, and in summer I hunt a box and save up my dimes. And as fer grub, New York is full of that."

"That is all right, Harry, but that won't do. You must have a home, and I am going to take you to my home and make you one of the family. My mother will be glad to have you with us, I know, and you must be a second Broadway Billy to her. How will that suit you?"

"Oh, Christopher Columbia! You don't mean it!"

"Yes, I do mean it. But, there must be an understanding between us before we go any further."

"And what is that? I am willin' to agree to anything you say, fer I know you won't ask anything of a fellow that ain't right. What is it?"

"Well, I'll put it to you plain and straight. You have got to promise me you won't chew, smoke or drink; that you won't swear; and that you'll never lie or steal. If you can't promise all that I don't want you."

"Oh Christopher!" cried Happy Harry. "You hit me right where I'm at home, now, Mr. Weston. I am cured of all that a'ready. When I used to read about you, at first, I did smoke and chew, as other street walkers do, and sometimes I'd swear; but when I found you didn't do anything like that, why I quit it, right off sharp."

"Well, I'm glad of that, and I'm glad my mother's influence has spread out a little further than myself. More than that, if you have been taking me for your model I am glad my record is clean all the way through. I tell you what it is, Harry, no boy can hope to be the right kind of a man if he don't begin by being the right kind of boy; and the boy that chews, smokes and drinks, to say nothing about worse things, is all wrong, and will sooner or later go wrong."

"I know it. Why, I'm twice as strong as I was when I sucked cigarettes all day."

"Of course you are. Then you promise all the things I have named, do you? I want your honest word on that point."

"I promise, you bet. And I'll stick to it, too!"

"Well, that point is settled, then, and you are to have a home at my house and be one of the family. I'll give you that free of cost, and will pay you something besides, for a year. By that time I can tell what you are good for."

"That suits me. All I want is a good chance, and I guess I can prove how worthless I am in a good deal less time than a year."

"Well, it is all settled, then. We'll see about fixing you out for clothes, for of course you won't play bootblack all the time, though that is one of the best cards you can have in hand. I want you to do your best, Harry, if you are going to take the place of Broadway Billy."

At that moment the door opened.

The person who entered was Billy's patron saint, the person above all others whose confidence he cared for, the metropolitan chief!

"Good-morning, Billy!" he greeted. "I see you are open for business, as you said you intended."

"Good-morning!" Billy responded, rising and offering his hand. "Yes, I am on hand, but business isn't crowding me very hard, yet."

The chief smiled.

"Don't expect too much," he advised. "This is your birthday, I believe."

"Yes, sir."

"And you are twenty-one."

"Yes."

"Well, I am your first caller, I suppose."

"Yes, sir."

"Exceptin' me," put in Harry. "I was on hand before the office opened fer business."

"And who are you?" the chief asked.

"Mr. Weston will tell you that, sir."

"He is a boy I have engaged," Billy explained.

"And a likely boy he looks, too. What is he going to do? You want him in the office, I suppose."

"I want him to take the place I am stepping out of," answered Billy. "He is going to be Broadway Billy, second—to do the work that only a boy can do."

"Ha! I see. Not a bad idea. But, I doubt whether he will be able to fill your old shoes, Billy. That remains to be seen. I have confidence in your judgment in that respect, however. Now, I have not come here for an idle purpose, but on business."

"Anything I can do?" Billy asked.

"That will have to be seen. Let me explain. In the first place, I wanted to bring you good luck."

"Glad to hear that."

"Some folks believe that the first caller or customer at a new office or place of business determines the success of the establishment. If there is anything in that, and if my standing counts for anything, here I am."

"I'm sure I'm thankful for your kindness, sir."

"Don't mention that! Besides that, business brings me here. As this is your birthday, and as you have just opened for business, I want to put a case into your hands. I don't mean that I want your help on a case, but I am going to turn one over to you entirely."

"I'm half afraid to take it, and that's the solid truth."

"Nonsense! It may not be an easy one; in fact, I am sure it will not be; but, I want you to take hold of it, all the same."

"What sort of case is it?"

"That I intend to leave for the person most interested to explain in his own way, so that you can draw your first impressions right from headquarters, as it were. You know there is some advantage in that."

"Yes, so there is. Who is this person you speak of?"

"His name is Matthias Rundle. He will probably call here about ten o'clock. I have already referred him to you."

"Well, I don't know how to thank you, sir, and I'll try to do my best, and so not make you ashamed of having referred him to me. I never felt so little confidence in myself as I do this morning."

"Don't let your feelings trouble you any. When this man comes to see you he may express some surprise at finding so young a man, but you can soon convince him that your head is older than your appearance, and it will not take you long to impress him the right way."

"Perhaps."

"I know it. I have measured your capacity more than once, Billy Weston. I would not take this interest in you, if I did not know what there is in you. That San Francisco badge of yours is a whole volume in itself. Then your record at Denver is one not to be ashamed of. There is no *perhaps* about it."

"Well, I only hope your confidence isn't misplaced, sir."

"So do I. If it should ever turn out so, then I'd be convinced that my observing powers do not amount to much."

"And I hope some day you'll have confidence in me, too," spoke up Happy Harry, boldly.

"That's what I'm goin' to work for, the same as Billy did."

"It remains to be seen what you can do," was the serious response. "You are beginning on a record already made, you must remember. If you hold your own you will have good reason to congratulate yourself."

Then the chief took his leave.

CHAPTER III.

RATHER A REMARKABLE REQUEST.

AFTER the departure of Billy's first caller, Billy and Happy Harry fell to talking again, and Harry strengthened the good impression he had already made upon the mind of his young employer.

Harry's history was brief, and it was the same as the history of many a poor boy in mighty Gotham. Born of poor parents, his father dying when he was yet a babe, and his mother following soon after, he had been kicked upon the streets and was a genuine specimen of the genus gamin.

"Well," said Harry, finally, "hadn't I better take myself away fer the present? I ain't a very sightly ornament to a gentleman's office."

"No, don't go yet," ordered Billy. "Stay and get a look at this Mr. Rundle when he comes. It may be useful for you to know him by sight. As soon as he comes you may go."

"All right."

"And then, if I don't see you again before noon, you go home and introduce yourself to my mother and tell her I sent you. I have spoken to her about you, and it will be all right."

"You're the boss, sir, and I'll do jest as you say. Christopher Columbia! I can't hardly believe this is me! Ter think that I should be in the 'ploy of the genuine Broadway Billy—It most takes away my breath. Can't seem to realize it yet, nohow. But, seems ter be the fack, sure enough."

"Oh, it is so, Harry; and I want you to do all you can to prove how much you care for me."

"And I'll do it—crackers an' cheese, yes! Jest as you had the ambition to win the confidence of the great mogul, so I have a desire to get there in *your* regard. I'm goin' ter try, hard."

A step was heard in the hall, a step accompanied with a hard thump, and the door opened.

A little old man came in, a heavy cane in his right hand and his left on the knob of the door, with which he closed the door after him softly.

He scrutinized Billy, and then Happy Harry, and in a moment made known the object of his call, in a high, thin voice.

"Where is Mr. Weston?" he demanded.

"I am Mr. Weston, sir," Billy answered.

The old man brought his cane down upon the floor with a hard thump, shaking his head.

"No! no!" he cried, impatiently; "I mean Mr. Weston the detective. Your father, I presume, seeing that is your name. Where is the other Mr. Weston?"

Billy had to smile.

"I am the only Mr. Weston who has anything to do with this office, sir," he declared. "Is your name Matthias Rundle, sir?" he inquired. "If it is, I am probably the person you are looking for."

The old man had straightened up with a start, at mention of the name.

"That is certainly my name," he admitted; "but, how came *you* to know me? I am not aware that I ever saw you before."

Happy Harry had been edging toward the door, having taken a good look at the old man, and now, as the visitor advanced into the room, opened the door and slipped out.

Billy noted his going, and that he had obeyed his injunction about taking a mental picture of Mr. Rundle before leaving the office. He noted, too, that he had not gone till he had heard the man's name. These points pleased the detective.

"Harry will do," he told himself.

"And I am sure I have never seen you before, sir," he made response to the visitor. "I guessed at your name from the fact that I was expecting a man of that name to call on me."

"Ha! Then you had been told of my coming?"

"I had been told that you had been directed to my office, sir."

"Hum! Yes, I have been sent here, and by a man in whom I had much confidence; but I expected to find a *man* here, and not a *boy*."

"Well, please be seated," requested Billy, "and we will talk it over. Take that chair; I think you will find that one comfortable. No, I am not very old, I admit, but I have had experience."

"Um! What do you think you can do in a case like mine?"

"I can do the best I can, sir, and no man can do any more than that. When I take hold of a case I make up my mind that I am going to work it out, and I have never been defeated yet. I am prepared to render the best service I am capable of, sir."

"Well, well, I suppose it is all right, or a man like the chief would not have recommended you to me. He spoke highly of you, and it is plain that he has confidence in you. He sent you word, then, that I would call on you, did he? That was kind of him. Wanted to make sure I'd find you in, I suppose."

"He came here and told me himself," answered Billy.

"Hal! Came here in person, did he? Well, it must be all right. And he spoke about my case, did he? What do you think of it?"

"Yes, he spoke about it, sir; but before I give you my opinion I want to hear all about it from your own lips. We are alone here, and you may speak out freely. I will pay attention."

The old gentleman looked around.

"Where is that boy that was here?" he demanded.

"He has gone out," answered Billy. "He was only a bootblack."

"Well, he disappeared mysteriously, that's all. He was right there the last I saw of him."

"You did not notice him, that was all, sir. But, let me hear your story, if you please, if you are going to trust me with the matter, and we will talk it over and see what can be made out of it."

"Um! Yes, business must be attended to. Let me tell you, young man, before I begin, that my case puzzled the chief when I laid it before him."

"I have no doubt of it, sir. A case that is not puzzling is not worth taking to a detective at all. The more puzzling the matter the harder the work, and the harder the work the more determined we are to win."

"I see, I see. I begin to think I have not been sent amiss in being directed to you."

Mr. Rundle rested his chin on his hands for some moments, his hands crossed on the head of his cane, and was silent and thoughtful.

"No; I cannot understand it," he declared, presently. "I can't understand it. I can't understand it at all. Not at all. Why my dead daughter should appear to me so regularly, week after week, is more than I can fathom."

Billy pricked up his ears at this bit of information.

What manner of case was he about to take hold of, anyhow? Was this old man in his right mind?

"And you can't understand what I am talking about, either, I suppose?" the old man observed. "You can't understand that any better than I can understand the mystery of the affair. Why should a dead girl return and demand money of her father? Can you tell me that, sir?"

"No, I am not prepared to explain it yet," was Billy's reply.

"And I am afraid you never will be prepared to explain it, either. You are not a spiritualist, are you, sir?"

"No, sir," Billy answered promptly.

"So I supposed. I have failed to find a detective who is one. It seems detectives do not take to that faith."

"I guess you are right, sir. Detectives generally have enough to do in looking after flesh and blood, without fooling away any time on spirits. Besides, the two ideas don't hitch very well."

"Maybe you are right. Be that as it may, I failed to find one of that faith. You see, sir, I thought if I could find one who was a spiritualist he would be better able to understand the situation than one who was not. Failing, I must do the best I can, you see."

"Exactly."

"Now, I am very glad to see my daughter, sir, and it gives me great comfort when she tells me of her happiness in the other world; but her demands for money are becoming rather wearing on my nerves, to say nothing of its making a hole in my funds, and I want to know what becomes of the money."

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy exclaimed in mind. His position was now too dignified to admit of his using his pet ejaculation aloud. "What is wanted of me, anyhow? Does he want me to disembody myself and go on an exploring expedition into the land of shadows? This is likely to be a little wearing on *my* nerves, the same as it is on his and his bank account."

"You are silent," the old man observed.

"I was thinking," returned Billy. "Do

spirits have any use for money in the other world?"

"No, positively no!" was the reply to that. At the same time as he spoke he thumped vigorously on the floor with his cane, as if summoning somebody from below.

"What are you pounding for?" asked the detective.

"It is not I, but the spirits," the old man answered earnestly.

Billy looked at him in half pity and half disgust. He considered him only a little short of non compos.

"I see you do not understand," the old man went on. "I am a medium. Spirits operate on me and through me at pleasure. The rappings you heard was spiritual approval of my statement."

"That they have no use for money?"

"Exactly. Am I right?"

The last was asked in a different tone, as if to some other person, and again the cane beat a tattoo on the floor.

"You see the approval," the old man called attention. "They bear witness to my statement that they have no use for money in that happy land. Ha! it is a great science, young man."

"And you believe in it fully, of course."

"To be sure. And why should I not? I have been there, sir, actually *been there*. Once I lay in a trance twenty days, while my spirit held high revel in the halls of delight. Ha! if your blind eyes could only see!"

"I wish they could," declared Billy, solemnly. "Then I might be able to tell you what became of your money."

"Um! Yes, that is the point. What does become of my money? What use does my spirit child make of it? And why does she come so often? I cannot understand it, can't understand it."

"And what do you want me to do, sir?"

"I want you to find out what is done with it, sir, since we know it cannot be taken to the land of spirits."

Broadway Billy had to scratch his head. Here was something new in his experience? How was he to deal with such a case—to shadow shadows? Perhaps it was a hoax! But, no, that did not seem reasonable, for that would imply that the chief was a party to it.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. RUNDLE'S STORY.

"WHAT do you think about it?" the old man asked, impatiently.

"That's a plain enough question," Billy made response. "I suppose you want a plain answer."

"Certainly, sir; the plainer the better. Right?"

That query was addressed to the spirits. Again did the cane thump the floor with considerable vigor.

"I see the spirits approve of it," remarked Billy, "so I will talk pretty plainly to you. I think you are being beautifully humbugged. That's my first impression."

"Ha! Hum! You mean to say that spiritualism is a humbug?"

"No, I don't say that, for I do not know enough about the merits of the faith to condemn it; but, when your spirits begin to bleed you of your substance I think it is about time to suspect something wrong."

"You may be right, you may be right; but, how do you account for my daughter's coming to me from the other world once a week to get money?"

"Are you certain it is your daughter?"

"To be sure I am. Don't you suppose I know my own child?"

"Well, that ought to be proof enough, I suppose. Does she tell you what she wants the money for? You admit that money is of no use in Spirit Land."

"Of no use whatever there, sir. No material thing or substance can pass in to that mysterious country. Only the immaterial, the spiritual, can cross the border and enter there. Right?"

Another tattoo of the cane on the floor in response.

"Have you asked the spirit of your daughter what use she makes of it?" Billy inquired.

"Yes, I have put that question," the old man answered.

"And what did she say?"

"She assured me it was made the best of use of; that it relieved distress and advanced the cause of spiritualism in many ways."

"And her spirit is substantial enough to receive this money from your hands and disappear with it, eh?"

"My son, my son, you do not understand.

You do not know even the A B C of the wonderful science yet. Even we who are aged in its practice are but children in it, as it were. Right?"

Again were the spirits called upon to verify, and again did the cane thump on the floor.

"Then it isn't managed that way, eh?" queried Billy.

"No, no, no. What is spirit? Spirit is immaterial essence. Spirit is nothing, yet something. It is superior to everything else in the universe. Spirit is the first and the last. Spirit is everything. Right?"

Some more thumpings.

"Spirit is even superior to money, eh?"

"Money is a base substance, sir. It belongs to the material world. Spirits have no use for money."

"And yet—"

"Exactly. Spiritualism is a material thing. The world is material, and to advance the cause the material must assist the immaterial. Don't you see?"

"I don't see very clearly," answered the young detective. "You are drifting away from the main question. How does the spirit of your daughter manage to get away with this money when you give it to her?"

"Not so fast, young man, not so fast. I am older than you, and know what I am talking about. You say I am drifting from the main question. Not so. I was coming to it. You cannot understand; you are spiritually blind—as blind as a bat."

"I guess you are right," Billy thought.

"Yes, I was coming to that at once, I repeat," the old man went on. "What I said was, that to advance the cause the material must assist the immaterial; and that is to be taken *vice versa*, of course. Do you follow me?"

"I understand what you say, sir."

"Very well. Now, when a spirit desires to have to do with material things, how is it to be accomplished? Spirit is not matter; it is, as I said, immaterial essence. How can it act upon material things? In other words, how can the spirit of my daughter accept and take away money?"

"There, you have come to it," Billy admitted.

"Yes; and now to explain. In order for spirits to make their influence felt in the world, in order to bring themselves to the observation of material beings, they must have media; plural, *media*; singular, *medium*. I am a medium. Do you still follow me? You see, through me spirits respond to questions put by that which is material; I am material. Now I ask: Am I right?"

That last was again addressed to the spirits, and the cane thumped on the floor as before.

"Sweet pertaters!" cried Billy in mind, "but this is gettin' to be a medium singular case, and that's a fact. I wonder when the old fellow will run down and come to the point? I shall have to take him in hand if he don't come to business pretty shortly."

"Do you begin to understand?" the old gentleman asked.

He had worked himself up to a high pitch of interest in his own ideas, by this time, and it was plain to be seen that he was a fanatic.

"I understand it all as far as you have gone," answered Billy. "You are slow in coming down to solid facts, however."

"Yes, yes, you are right, perhaps; but, you raised questions that demanded a full explanation in order that you might go into this case intelligently, as it were. Too bad I could not find a spiritualist detective."

Billy agreed with him, heartily, in mind.

"The point raised was," the old man went on, "how does a spirit receive money from me and take it away, when spirit is only essence? Now I answer: In order to come to me in visible shape, the spirit of my child must have a medium. That medium must be a living body. It come, and by the voice, the affectionate terms, and the expressed knowledge of things which only my child could know, I recognize it as her own spirit."

"Ha!" cried Billy. "Now I begin to get there, as it were. The spirit comes in real flesh and blood, and takes away your ducats just as I or any one else might take them. Now, this begins to look like a case. I had my doubts about being able to cope with these beings from another realm, at first, but now that I find they come in mortal guise I guess I will stand some chance. We are getting at the facts in the right shape. Now that I have had my lesson in spiritualities, so to say, let us stick right to the material facts in the case."

"Young man, I am glad the chief sent me to you," cried the aged spiritualist. "You have a

manner of grasping things that is gratifying. You understand so readily, take hold so promptly, as it were, that I shall hope that we may yet enroll you among us of the faith. But, you are eager to get at the material facts, as you term them. I will gratify you, and I must not impose too long on your time, either. Now, in what manner will you have me proceed? Shall I tell the story in my own way, or will you draw the facts in your way by asking questions? I want to please you, and at the same time do what is best."

"I understand that you simply want to know what becomes of this money; is that it?"

"That is it, sir. I want to satisfy myself that the judgment of my daughter in the matter is sound; also to gain, by this means, further proof that will convince the skeptic mind that our faith is all we claim for it."

"Exactly. And if you find that good us, has been made of the money, as you have reason to believe has been the case, then you will be satisfied; but, on the other hand, if you find that you have been duped, bled by an artful dodger, then you want the offenders punished as they deserve."

There was a moment of silence.

"Young man," Mr. Rundle demanded, "how can you read my innermost thoughts? I fail to understand it. How could you guess that away down in my soul there is a doubt in this matter? Tell me, sir."

"Well, out West they would call it horse sense," answered Billy. "That is, I apply the rule of common sense to it, and figure it out by that rule. In the first place, if you had no doubt you would not seek the aid of a detective in the matter."

"It was my doubt that led me to do so, I admit."

"And having a doubt, your spiritualism is just a little shaky, especially as you see your pocketbook growing thinner."

"No, no, no! I can't admit that—I won't admit it, sir! My faith is all right; but I want to know what is done with my money. My daughter comes for it, that I know; but is her judgment sound? Or, perchance, is she being overruled by spirits of evil? I cannot tell; that is what I want to know."

"All right; that is what we will set about finding out. Now, for the points; you may go ahead and tell the story in your own way, keeping strictly to the material facts."

"Young man, I like you;—I like you very well indeed. I like your brief and blunt manner. I like the way in which you hold the main point in mind. I am sure the chief knew what he was doing when he sent me to you. If it isn't a case of old head on young shoulders I'm mistaken, that's all."

Billy was silent, giving the man full opportunity to go ahead and get his story out.

Mr. Rundle beat about it no longer, but came right to the matter in its material bearings.

"My name, as you know," he began, "is Matthias Rundle. I live at No. —— street. My wife has been in the other world many years, and I live alone with my old housekeeper. I have one son, who is here in New York, but who is not a spiritualist. He denounces it as sheer, stupid humbuggy. But he is blind, sir; blind, blind."

"I had a daughter, a dear soul, who died five years ago. She was a believer, and one of the best mediums I ever saw. She was the light of my declining years, and were it not that she comes to me now from the spirit world, life would be unbearable. She was once in a trance for several days, and she wrote a beautiful book about her experience in the other land."

"Keep to facts regarding the present case," said Billy.

"Yes, yes; that is so. One is so apt to wander into enticing paths. Well, I am a man of some means, and having no faith in banks I keep all my money in my house, in a little, old-fashioned safe in my bedroom. My daughter knew this well enough, and in life it was open to her at any and all times, and she was as free to use it as I was myself. She was careful of it, too, and I could trust her fully. If anything, she was a more restricting manager than I was myself."

"Then it is only since she has been a spirit that she has made inroads into the funds, eh?" said Billy.

"You say aright, my son. But, she explains it. She sees now the folly of hoarding up that which, to-day, somewhere, is needed so badly by our fellow-creatures, and she can see cases where it will do the most good, cases which I could never know anything about. And so I have given money to her, time after time, until now

it has come to be a regular thing, each week, for her to bring some case to my notice, and the demands have been growing larger and larger until I can foresee that my fortune will not stand the constant drain. Still, I hesitate about refusing, for every case brought to my notice is more distressing than the last."

CHAPTER V. HAPPY HARRY ON HAND.

"CHRISTOPHER COLUMBIA!"

So exclaimed Happy Harry, when he left the office, after the arrival of the old spiritualist, as shown.

"I can't seem ter think that this is me," he muttered, as he went down toward the street. "Wish somebody would come along and lift me one behind, jest to remind me that there ain't no mistake about it."

He evidently quickly concluded that would not do, however, since the fall to the bottom of two landings would not be an easy one, so skipped on down, and was soon at the bottom.

There he stopped and looked at Billy's sign in the hall.

"No, it don't seem real at all," he mused. "That I should come to know Broadway Billy, and then be really and truly in his 'ploy, and more'n that, to have him ask me ter take up the part he is jest layin' down. In short, to be Broadway Billy myself; Broadway Billy, Junior, mebby. But no, that won't do, fer Happy Harry is the banner I am going to fly."

While he stood there he became aware that two persons were standing just outside the door, and he glanced to see who they were.

One was a man and the other a woman. The man was a dark fellow, with black eyes, hair and mustache. The woman was veiled, and was somewhat richly dressed, but in too vulgar a style.

They had their backs partly toward him, and did not notice him, and he, in turn, would have taken no further notice of them, had it not been for a name which fell from the man's lips at the same moment.

"Old Rundle is too rich a prize to be allowed to get away," the fellow said, in response to some remark the woman had just made.

Happy Harry pricked up his ears instantly. What if they referred to the Rundle who was at that moment up-stairs in the office of Broadway Billy!

The boy had fixed in his mind much of what he had read concerning Broadway Billy, and especially of Billy's manner of doing things on the spur of the moment, when occasion required.

So, the thought coming to him that behind the big door was the place for him, he put himself there with all baste. There was a wide crack, and the man was leaning against the jamb with his head only a few inches from the crack, the woman only a little further distant.

Outside the crowd passing up and down, a constant stream, and these two had drawn back to be out of the way.

Happy Harry was not soon enough to hear what rejoinder the woman made, but he was ready for the next observation the man offered.

"I know it," he said; "but if he is going to run after the police and private detectives he must smell a mice, and I'm going to be mighty wary of him."

"Don't be afraid, for the police and detectives won't bother with him much. It won't take much of his kind of talk to convince them that he is a loony, and then they will drop him."

"But, it is plain that he is suspicious, and can't be worked much longer."

"Then we must make the best of him while he can be worked, that is all. We must have one more pull at his money-bags."

"What's the use, unless we can milk him dry? Little dribs at a time ain't any good to us no more. We must take a grand haul and be done with it. Either that, or I'm out of it."

"Well, maybe that can be done; but, let me tell you, five hundred dollars in less than three weeks isn't doing so bad. You have run bigger risks for a smaller sum, many a time. The main thing is, Gus, to keep him away from these places."

"And how are you going to do that, I should like to know?"

"We'll have to set the spirits after him so strong that he will be glad enough to drop it."

"That is all right; but, his suspicion is up, and it will be like drawing teeth to get any more out of him. As I said before, whole hog or none next time."

"Well, we'll plan for all of it, then."

"And what are you doing here? What good did you think you could do by following him?"

"Why, won't it be worth a good deal to know what detective he has? Seems to me you must be sleepy this morning, ain't you?"

"Mebbe you are right, Rosa. I didn't think about it, that way."

"You see, knowing what detective he has, we can play our cards to send him on a false scent, and while he is nosing around in a cold spot we can be laughing at him and shouting—'Hot, hotter, hottest!' to urge him on."

"And at the same time bleeding the old spook, eh?"

"Certainly."

"Well, that isn't slow."

"But, who is this detective? Do you know him, Gus?"

"I know of him. He is the same boy who once sent Sharkey Dan higher than a kite."

"You don't say!"

"The same cuss. They called him Broadway Billy, then."

"And now he's got to be a regular, has he? Well, he must be a good one, for he stands in well with the chief of them all."

"How do you know that?"

"It was he sent the old man here."

"And how do you know that?"

"The same way that I know a good many things. More than that, the chief has been here this morning himself."

"Well, if Billy Weston is a pet we shall have to look out all the more, that is all. I tell you I am going to fight mighty wary, Rosa Dubarre."

"Fight just as wary as you want to, and the more wary the better. We are not going to miss a good thing when we have it almost in our own hands. But, as you say, we had better make one job of it."

"I think so. What are you going to do next?"

"When do you mean?"

"I mean now. What are you stopping here for?"

"Oh! Why, I am going to fall in with the old man and have a spiritual talk with him."

"Won't be suspect that you have been shadowing him?"

"No, not at all, for he has perfect faith in me. I have closed the eyes of smarter men than he. Once in the spirit line they are quite willing to be bamboozled."

"We, you and I, are not alone in it, however."

"Gus Casmore, you don't suppose I have any partner with whom I am going to divide, do you?"

"You will ante up with me, or you don't get my help, that is all."

"I can get other help, then. I am going to pay you for what you do, the same as I pay others; but there will be no dividing with you."

Happy Harry noticed that the man's face grew darker than ever.

"You seem to forget you have partly let me into your secret," he growled. "What's to hinder my posting the old fellow and blocking your game?"

The woman laughed.

Neeless to say, Happy Harry was bound to let nothing escape him now.

"I will tell you what will hinder you," the woman made answer. "The fact that I have too much knowledge about you. You do not suppose Rosa Dubarre is a fool, do you, to take any one into her confidence unless she has the master hold?"

"Confound you! you don't mean to deal fair in this thing."

"Oh, yes, I do! I mean to pay you well if we succeed; if not, then nothing. And you must use your own wits to keep you out of trouble."

"Well, you hold the best cards this time, that I admit. What I have said has got to stand, though. It has got to be a clean sweep next time, or nothing. I won't try it again for anything less."

"And I have agreed to that. Come around this afternoon and we will talk it over more fully. The old man may not make a long stay up there, and you don't want to be seen."

"That's so; I'll be going. He will see you, though."

"He won't know me, as I'm fixed now. I'll take care to handle him in a scientific manner."

They both laughed, and stepping away from the door a pace or so, exchanged a few more remarks, when the man took his departure.

"Crackers an' cheese!" cried Happy Harry to himself, "what ort I ter do now? What would Broadway Billy do, if he was me? Would he foller his shakes and see where he goes to?"

He had little time for reflection, for the wo-

man stepped back and leaned against the door in the very place where the man had stood.

"The idea of thinking I would share with him!" she said to herself, in a spiteful tone just loud enough for Harry's sharp ears to catch. "He must be a fool. I have fed and clothed him, and now he thinks he has some claim upon me. Ha, ha!"

"You're a Tartar, and I'mbettin' on it," said Harry to himself. "And if it is you the old man up-stairs is complainin' about to Billy, you bet there will be a hot time for you in the near by and by. If Billy don't do up your back hair in a hard knot it will be funny."

The woman said no more, but waited.

"I begin ter see a'ready that I ain't a Broadway Billy," Harry mused. "Here I am gettin' some facts that p'int to what he would call a consarned diffikiltiy, and bless me if I know what to do with 'em. What am I good fer, anyhow? Think I'll sell out cheap and resign my commission. But, I must put the boss onto this thing first."

He was thoughtful, trying to consider what he should do.

"I'm 'most 'fraid I made a mistake in not folerin' that man," he said to himself. "But, how was I ter do it, the way the land laid just then? If I had gone out and after him, the woman'd a' twigged me, and she'd a' give the feller the tip before I knew it. No, that wasn't ter be did; and besides, she didn't give me any chance, fer no sooner was he gone than she planted herself here against the door. Reckon I did all I could do, and that was—nothin'."

Harry had quite a long wait, for the conversation between Billy and Mr. Rundle was a lengthy one.

Finally, however, the old man's cane was heard thumping on the steps, and immediately the woman left her place and hastened away up the street.

Happy Harry was out from behind the door in a second, and looked after the woman to see what she was going to do; and he soon saw. She ran a little distance, and then suddenly turned, her vail raised.

A moment later old Mr. Rundle emerged upon the street, and the woman walked toward him at a very slow pace, as if taking a leisurely stroll, and when they met the old man stopped her with an exclamation of surprise and greeted her in the most friendly way imaginable.

Harry's work was not done yet, he knew, and with box ready for business he moved toward the couple with the bootblack's usual cry.

If anything of importance was going to be said, he wanted to catch a word or two of it if possible.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT HAPPY HARRY HEARD.

"SHINE, sir? Shine? I kin polish 'em up so slick you'll think there's a big rory-bory-allis in the sky, to say nothin' of two suns and half a dozen moons. Shine? I kin turn common cowhide to patent-leather by a simple twist of the wrist. Shine? I will do 'em up so slick you'll think you've got 'lectric lights in your boots, and the boots made of glass. Shine, sir? Shine?"

"No, no, no! Get along with you and don't bother me!"

And as the old gentleman turned upon the boy he thumped upon the sidewalk with usual vigor.

"All right, mister, all right," cried Harry. "You needn't speak at me so sharp, though, for you are likely ter injure my nerves. Won't ye let me polish up yer understandin' fer ye? I kin do it while ye talk, and ye won't lose any time at all by it."

"No, no, no! Run right along now and don't bother, or I will take my cane to you. Dear me, dear me! What plagues these little street tramps are!"

"That settles it," cried Harry. "I won't mention it again, boss. If you want to go with rusty boots it ain't my fault. Shine, sir? Shine?" addressing other passers-by.

To be out of the way of the stream of humanity, the woman and Mr. Rundle had stepped to the curb, where they talked.

Happy Harry was not trying very hard to get a customer just then, and ceasing his cry he dropped his box on the curb just behind Mr. Rundle, planted his own foot upon it and proceeded to polish his shoe.

In order to hear each other, the man and woman had to speak aloud, and Harry was able to catch what was said without much effort.

"And what are you doing away down here?" the woman asked.

"Oh! I had a little business to attend to this morning, that is all. It is unusual to meet you as far away from home."

"Yes; but, like you, I am out on business; that is to say, I was on business, but having attended to it I was taking an idle stroll. Oh! we had a delightful seance last night, Mr. Rundle."

"Yes?"

"Yes, indeed! The mediums seemed to have unusual power, and once we could really see the shadowy forms of dear friends with us in the room."

"Wonderful! I am sorry I was not there. But, I shall attend soon. It is almost like missing food and drink to remain away, when one's whole soul is in the great faith. Oh! if others could only see!"

"Others will see, one day, sir. The true faith is growing day by day, and it is only a question of time. Yes, I longed to have you there last night, for your dear daughter was with us again, and she called for you many times."

"The dear child!"

"But she was depressed, for there was something heavy upon her mind."

"My poor, dear Betty!"

"She entered Miss Smith, her favorite medium, you know; and for several minutes talked with us."

"How sorry I am I was not there! When do you hold another seance, Miss Dubarre? I must be on hand and not miss another."

"To-night we meet again, Mr. Rundle, and it will give us the greatest pleasure to number you with us. You must not remain away, for one does lose power so rapidly, you know."

"I know it, I know it."

"And then, too, with loss of power one is so likely to lose faith; and nothing is so harmful to our cause as lukewarm interest."

"That is true, that is true; I have experienced it myself. I must be on hand at your next meeting. I must talk with my dear child as often as I can. It gives me pain to know she was depressed last night."

"Yes, it was too bad, and I longed to have you there. She seems to have but one idea now, and that is to relieve the needy and push forward our cause. It might alarm you, Mr. Rundle, were I to reveal a truth she made known to us last night."

"No, no; anything she revealed I ought to know."

"Yes, you ought to know it, truly; but it is painful to me to make it known."

"It was about me, then? You lead me to suspect it was, by your manner of speaking of it."

"Yes, it was about you."

"Then tell me what it was. Bad luck coming?"

"Indeed, no! And yet it is something we cannot face without some fear. The material body is a coward, you know."

"Ha! Am I nearing my dissolution?"

"I thought I would let you guess it yourself, sir."

Happy Harry was polishing away at his shoes with a will, and seemingly deaf, dumb and blind to everything else.

A sly look at the old gentleman showed the boy that his face had assumed a ghastly, yellowish pallor, and for a moment his cane thumped the sidewalk with vigor more material than spiritual.

"Hum!" he muttered. "Hum! Hum! So, I am nearing the portals, am I?"

"I tried to break it to you as gently as I could, dear brother. That was the revelation your child made."

"That should not have made her low in spirit, I should think. Often has she expressed the wish that I might soon join her and her mother, to share their happiness in that better land."

"Oh! I am sure it was not that, sir, that affected her."

"What then?"

"She did not tell us plainly, but I inferred it was concerning the disposition of your material goods before the time comes."

"Um!"

"That, however, is between you and her; I must have nothing to say about your private affairs, and especially about money matters. Let your own heart be your guide. You must not ask me to advise you."

"I am troubled about one thing, Rosa."

"And what is that?"

"I should like to know the exact use that is made of my money."

"Well, that is natural, from the material point of view. Perhaps I would feel the same

way myself. Still, you ought to be able to trust your daughter, I should say. But, I must express no opinion in such a matter, Mr. Rundle; pray do not expect me to do so."

"Did she say how soon the change is coming, Miss Dubarre?"

"I inferred that it is to be very soon— There, I have startled you! Forgive me for speaking out so plainly."

"Hum! Hum! Hum!" with a furious pounding of the cane. "What a coward the flesh is, to be sure! This news, this good news, this glorious news, has actually made the material man tremble."

"But the spiritual—"

"Hah! the spiritual will triumph, and the material shall be put down. Do you not see that already the spirit part is gaining the mastery?"

"Yes, so it is, so it is. Oh! Mr. Rundle, if we could only put the mortal out of sight, and be wholly spirit!"

"If we could! But, nature will have her due, you know. The mortal must perish and return to the dust. The spirit has but one way of escape. Death is the only door to the happy state we long for."

"And death, we know, is painless, so why need we tremble? As the body grows weaker the spirit grows stronger, and as soon as the spirit triumphs all pain is at an end. We have seen dear friends die, and we know whereof we speak. Is it not so, Mr. Rundle?"

"Yes, yes, so it is. There was poor Betty. She was full of pain and anguish for a time, but as the body gave way the spirit rose in its beauty, and at the last her face was wreathed in smiles; and with her spiritual sight she told us of the beautiful scenes opening before her, and at last she fell sweetly asleep. Oh! there is nothing to fear."

"Well, Mr. Rundle, now that I have told you of the revelation, you must prepare for the change. I was given to believe that it will come within a very few days, at most."

"I shall be prepared to meet it."

"That is well. But, here we stand, and I am detaining you. Now, do not fail to be on hand to-night."

"Oh! I will be there, if alive, that I promise; and if not alive, then maybe I shall be permitted to come in my spirit form. What a glorious faith is ours!"

"Yes, indeed! But, I must be going on, Mr. Rundle. Do not allow the mortal to depress the spiritual, now, but let the spirit rise in the beauty of its strength and power above the earthly."

"It shall! Yes, it shall!"

They shook hands in the most affectionate way, and parted.

The woman continued on down Broadway, and after gazing after her for a few moments Mr. Rundle tottered away in the other direction.

"Christopher Columbia!" cried Harry, as he pitched his brushes into his box and flung the box to his shoulder. "What sort of a consarned diffikilty is in the wind here? That's what Billy would want ter know, at my age, and that's what I am after, too. Seems ter me there must be ghosts abroad to-day. Whew! it made my flesh creep to hear 'em!"

He gazed after the woman, and then after the man, in turns.

"If this don't peel the posters off the bill-board, then my head is a punkin, that's sure," he cried. "Crackers an' cheese! They have talks with folks in the other world, do they? I have heard of sech things, but never took much stock in it. I must put the boss onto this racket, sure. Mebby it has some connection with what the old man wanted ter see him about. Harry, I'll bet five cents to a nickel that you are going to have a case on hand this very day, to celebrate the birthday of your boss and the opening of the office!"

Still looking after the two persons, he watched them till they had become lost in the throng, and then bent his steps toward the office.

"Yes, sir-ee!" he cried. "There is going to be a ruction in spirit circles; I feel it in my bones. I shouldn't wonder if there was a ghost-walk to-night, in which the mortals will take a hand. Crackers an' cheeze! a fellow would want a big dictionary in his head ter grip fast ter all the big words they used! I'll bet Billy kin understand all about it, though, for he has got learin', sure. He told me about the books he had waded through, an' 'vised me ter begin the same course. Made my blood run thin in my veins ter think of et. No use talkin', if I expect ter be what he has been I hev got ter git up and hump. But, I'm goin' in fer it, if it kills me. I have made up my mind ter be Billy Number Two!"

By the time he came to the end of his mutter-

ings he was at the door of the office, and opening it and finding Billy alone, he dropped his box on the floor on its side and promptly stood on it on his head, with arms and legs outstretched.

CHAPTER VII.

BILLY OPENS THE BALL.

BROADWAY BILLY had been pacing the floor, with his hands clasped behind his back, and he stopped and looked at his youthful ally with a smile.

"Well, what seems to be the trouble, Harry?" he asked, when the boy had maintained his position for some seconds. "Something must have happened, either very good or very bad, to make you stand on your head."

Bringing down his hands and giving a nimble spring the lad was upon his feet at once.

"Christopher Columbia!" he cried. "I don't know whether I'm a bowlin' Hottentot or a Hindoo idol! If I ain't either one, then I don't know whether I'm a ghost, a goblin, or a dead mortal. The fact is, my head is so full of notions that I reckon it'll bu'st."

"What do you mean?" Billy demanded. "Were you listening at the door all the time that old gentleman was in here?"

"Nixey. Haven't been near the door. Was down on the street all the time. I have been 'tendin' a spiritual see aunts, or somethin' of that sort, whatever it is they call it. Oh! I tell you there is goin' ter be a ghost-walk to-night, and you must be there to see the fun. Reckon I'll take it in m'self, if I kin git in."

"See here, Harry, what are you talking about?"

"Ghosts, goblins, spooks, shadders, speerits of jus' men made perfec'."

"Yes, but what do you mean by it all? Out with it!"

"That old man was here about ghosts, wasn't he?"

"What has that got to do with it, if you wasn't listening?"

"It's got all ter do with it. If he was here about ghosts, then I'll bet a cent that I've got his chief spook right by the tail."

"Well, yes, he was telling me about his spiritual dealings, but if you were not listening at the door how did you find out anything about it?"

"Let me give it to ye easy; ye might not be able ter take it all at one dose. Ever hear of Gus Casmore?"

"I believe I have; and if it's the one I bring to mind, I have never heard any good of him, either."

"You remember Sharkey Dan?"

"Yes."

"Well, this Gus knows him."

"Then it's the same one. But, what about him?"

"And do you know a fairy named Rosa Du-barre?"

"No, I believe not."

"Well, she and Gus are in the ghost business at present, and they are going to work old man Rundle fer all he is worth, and maybe more, too. Oh! I tell you they have got a beautiful lay-out."

"Look here, Harry, if you don't get right down to facts and tell me the whole business at once, I'll shake you in a way that will make it appropriate for you to resign your commission as my assistant."

Under which threat Harry unbosomed himself promptly enough, telling all he had heard and seen.

"Sweet pertaters!" cried Billy—out aloud, too, when he had heard all. "You were right in guessing there is a consarned diffikilty a-brewing. There is a big piece of rascality on foot here, and we have got to run it, like a rat, to its hole. You have made a big stroke already, Harry, and I am proud of you. I believe you are going to prove yourself as good as I ever was at your age, if not better."

"Git out! You will make me blush, boss, if you keep on."

"Blush all you want to. But, Harry, it is now in order for you and me to take this thing in hand."

"I'm willin', you bet! But, I don't see what I am goin' ter do ter help. Seems ter me I made a mess of it in not follerin' all of 'em to see where they went to and what they did."

"Nothing of the sort. Your judgment was good. If you had followed the fellow Casmore you would have missed the best part of it, and wouldn't have done any good at all. We can pick up their trails when we want them. All we haue to do to find Rosa is to keep an

eye on Mr. Rundle; and then to find Casmore we will keep Rosa in sight. Oh! it is a beautiful scheme they have in motion, but I think you and I will be enough for them. I am to call on Mr. Rundle early this afternoon, and after that perhaps I shall be able to make a start in the case."

"Then I can't do anything till I see you again after that, hey?"

"No; unless you take up the trail on your own account and follow it in some direction to learn all you can. But, I haven't told you about the case. It is right you should know something about it, now that you are in it."

"I've got more in my noodle now than I can hold there."

"Nonsense. I had a long talk with this old man, and it is plain that some one is bleeding him of his money. You have shown me just who the persons are, and have given me a big boost. I'll be able to surprise him not a little when I call on him. The case is, they have taken him in his weak spot, and are spooking the ducats right out of his pocket. We have got to open his eyes and stop the business."

"Why, I had all that before."

"Yes; but here is a point you didn't have. This man Rundle has a son here in New York, one Jonas Rundle, whom the old man has cut off in his will for the reason that he, Jonas, would not be a spiritualist. The old man is welcome to his opinion, but my idea is that Jonas has boss sense. Anyhow, it looks so. Well, Jonas has made threats that if he was not to have any share in the money no one else should, and lately the old man's will has disappeared. Taking that, and this bleeding of money, it seems to me that Jonas may have a hand in it all. This is only a guess, you understand. And I'll tell you what you can do."

"What is it?"

"Go and find this Jonas Rundle and size him up. You can let me know what you think of him when we meet at dinner. I am going in another direction. Take care you don't give anything away, and more care that you don't get into trouble."

"How am I ter know where to find him?"

"He lives at No. — street."

"Ha! that's more like it. Well, I'm off."

"Yes, go it; and good luck to you."

Gamin Harry turned a handspring over his box, bringing it up with him as he came right side up, and with it in place on his shoulder made his exit.

"I'll bet he is going to be a trump," muttered Billy, when he had gone. "He has the right snap about him. Anyhow, I'll give him a fair chance."

Billy sat down at the desk and was thoughtful for a few minutes. The boy had placed excellent clews in his hands, and it only remained for him to handle the affair right, in order to arrest the guilty ones.

Presently he arose, stepped to a dresser and opened it, and from a box on a shelf took out an assortment of wigs and beards. From among the lot he selected a neat mustache and put it on.

His whole appearance was instantly changed, and he looked to be a young man of twenty-six at least.

"This will do," he said to himself, as he looked in a glass. "I will find this man Casmore if I can, and perhaps have a talk with him. I'm going to be a spiritualist!"

He went out and locked the door after him.

His room was not a great distance from Headquarters; so there he proceeded, entering the office as though he had every right in the establishment that any officer on the force had.

The chief glanced up, and recognized him at once in spite of the slight disguise. This was no surprise to Billy, for he knew well the power of penetration this man had. It would be a marvelous make-up that concealed his identity from this expert in detective science.

"That you, Billy?" he greeted. "What brings you here?"

CHAPTER VIII.

BILLY PLAYS GREENHORN.

BILLY responding to the greeting, at once made known his business.

"I want to learn something about a man," he said—"one Gus Casmore."

"Ha! what do you want with him?"

"I want to make his acquaintance and chum with him a little."

"Well, I can tell you all about him. He is a crook; my men have had him under surveillance more than once. One of his chief resorts is Brooser's, down on — street."

"The very information I was after. I want-

ed to know where I would be likely to meet him. I have him booked for this case of old man Rundle which I have taken hold of. A strange case, that, by the way."

The great man laughed. "What do you think of it?" he asked.

"I think the old fellow is a victim of misplaced confidence."

"And that he is being swindled in the neatest kind of way, eh?"

"Exactly—played on for a fool."

"Do you think you can help him any?"

"I'm going to help him or bu'st, sir."

"That's the way to go into a case; but, then, that's your style. Have you a clew? What points you to this man Casmore?"

"I've got not only a clew, but facts."

"Mind telling me?"

"Not at all. The chief rascals concerned are this man Gus Casmore and a woman named Rosa Dubarre."

"Rosa Dubarre? Why, she is one of the sleekest crooks in New York. Do you know her?"

"No. Never have seen her."

"Step there to the cabinet and look at Number—"

Billy stepped over to the cabinet containing the photographs of rogues, and picked out the number indicated.

"So, that's Rosa, is it?" he observed.

"That's the lady of the light finger."

"What is her lay?"

"Everything: confidence, blackmail, lifting, decoy—The whole gamut of crime. For some time we have lost sight of her."

"Well, I have found her, then, and she is now a spiritualist. She and this Casmore, and others with them, perhaps, are the ones who are duping Mr. Rundle and taking his hoarded dollars from him."

"It don't seem possible that you could get at this so soon, Billy. Has the old man learned something, and was thus able to put you on their track?"

"No; he was as innocent as a child. The fact is just here: The woman followed him to my office, and fell in with Casmore down on the street. My boy, Happy Harry, was there, and took in what passed between them."

"Good for him! I have an idea you have picked up a jewel in that lad, Billy. What did he learn?"

"Much. And, when the old man left the office and the woman accosted him and talked with him, then the boy learned more. He is a trump."

Billy laid the facts before the chief, since the case had been put in his way by him and he had a natural interest in it; and his patron congratulated him heartily upon his good fortune.

Billy soon took his leave and bent his steps in the direction of the place where he would be likely to find the crook Casmore.

The man Brooser, whom the chief had mentioned, kept a disreputable saloon, or dive, on one of the disreputable streets of the great metropolis—a man who had a hard name, and whose place had more than once received attention from the police.

Arriving there, Billy walked in, looking around him with the air of a stranger who found himself in a strange place. It being daytime, and an hour toward noon when business was dullest, not many persons were present, but Billy quickly discovered Casmore, seated at a table well back in a shadowy corner. He had a bottle before him, and was smoking.

Walking down toward him, Billy paused near him and asked:

"Would you mind answering a question or two, sir? I'm a stranger in New York and have to ask in order to get around."

The shark surveyed Billy keenly before answering.

He evidently made up his mind to be agreeable, for he pushed out a chair on the opposite side of the table with his foot and said:

"Why, yes, certainly. Sit down, and I'll post you the best I can. So, you are a greenhorn, are you?"

Billy accepted the seat.

"Yes, I suppose that's what you would call me," he answered.

"Where are you from?"

"I'm from Bucks county, Pennsylvania."

"Well, you can't be supposed to know much about New York, then. Still you don't look like a hayseed."

"Oh! our town is quite a big one, and we are civilized out there; but it ain't to be compared to New York. I hadn't any idea New York was so big."

"Yes, it's quite a village. Here, won't you have something with me?"

"Thanks, but I've got a heart trouble and can't drink or smoke at all. Doctor won't allow it."

"That's bad. Well, what do you want to know about this town?"

"My uncle warned me about talkin' to strangers when I set out, but you seem to be the right sort."

"You needn't be afraid to talk to me, I assure you."

"You see, I have just stepped into a considerable fortune, having just come of age, and I thought I'd like to see the sights."

"That's right. The man that hasn't seen the elephant, hasn't begun to live, and has no right to settle down without seeing it. If that is what you want, I'd like no better fun than to show you around."

"Would you do that, really?"

"Yes; and it won't cost you much, either. I won't charge you a cent, only of course you will have to ante the footing for both. You know what that means? You will have to pay the little expenses as we go along."

"Oh! I'd expect to do that, anyhow. You say you know it all, eh?"

"Well, there isn't much I don't know about New York. I guess I can show you the elephant from the tip of his trunk to the tip of his tail."

"Then it's a bargain, and I'm glad I dropped in here."

"By the way, I believe I have got something on hand for this very night that will just suit you. How long are you going to stay here?"

"Oh! a week or two; just as long as the fun holds out."

"That's good. Then we can take this thing in to-night nicely. Do you believe in spiritualism?"

"Well, I don't know much about it, but my uncle, he is just crazy over it. I wish I could pick up some items about it here, to tell him of it when I go back."

"Well, you are in luck, then. I am partly a believer in it myself; in fact, they say I'm a medium, and I know they do make me have spells when I go there. To-night there is going to be great seance, and we'll go."

"Bully! That will just suit me."

"Then it is settled. Where shall we put in the afternoon? Had your dinner yet?"

"No; and I can't be with you till night, either. I have got to go and see an aunt if I can find her, and she'll keep me to dinner and 'most all the afternoon."

"Know where to find her?"

"That's what I wanted to ask you about. What's the nearest way to — street? You see I'm green."

"Why, you can take the L and ride right up there. What number is it you are after?"

"Number —."

Billy gave the address of his own home.

"It won't be a long walk when you get out, and any one there can show you the direction."

"All right, and much obliged to you. You see, this aunt of mine thinks I'm an angel, and will read me any quantity of goody-goody lectures, but I won't say a word about you and what we are going to do."

"That's right."

"I'll have my fun on the quiet, you know. What's your name?"

"My name is Gus Casmore. What is yours?"

"Mine is William Weston. I'm sure we are going to get along famously together, Mr. Casmore."

"You bet we are. But, where shall we meet?"

"I can come back here."

"What time will you come?"

"Any time you say, after supper."

"All right; you be here at eight, and we'll go out and coax the elephant out of his jungle."

Billy laughed.

"I think there is going to be some fun," he declared. "I'm glad I fell in with you. By the way, how much money will I want in my pocket? I've got slathers of it."

"Oh, you won't have to spend a great deal; but it won't be bad to have some on hand in case it's needed. Money is your best friend in New York. I always carry a couple of hundred hid away. Of course I wouldn't tell any one else so."

"Certainly not. I'll be well fixed in that line, then, with some loose change handy for use. That's the way my uncle told me to do it. Well, I had better go, or I will be late finding that place, and my dear old aunty and her pet cats. Ha, ha!"

CHAPTER IX.

HARRY VISITS JONAS

"CRACKERS AN' CHEESE! Christopher Columbia!"

So exclaimed Broadway Billy's second, as he made his way in the direction of the address with which Billy had provided him.

"Seems ter me the moon must have dropped out of the sky," he mused, "and crowned me with a sort of golden hello, as it were. Can't get it into my noodle yet that I ain't dreamin' in."

He was moving along with his box on his shoulder and his hands deep in his pockets, apparently as free and easy and as happy as though he owned the whole city. He was seldom seen any other way than happy, as far as appearances went, and hence his cognomen.

"Wonder what Broadway Billy expects me ter do when I get there, anyhow? Does he expect me ter wade in and lick Jonas 'cause he won't be a spirit list? Or does he want me ter clap him on the back and holler 'Good boy, Joney?' But, what was it he told me ter do? I'm ter go and see this Jonas and size him up. Now, that's a nice job fer a greeny ter try!"

Nevertheless, he went straight ahead and never stopped till he came to the place of his destination.

It was a quiet house in a quiet quarter, a two-story brick, and the street was one of those on the west side, which at night are filled with trucks.

Happy Harry took a good survey of the house from the opposite side of the street before crossing over for nearer acquaintance, and decided that it was a poor but respectable habitation.

He made up his mind that it was occupied by two families.

There was evidence of this which his trained eye read easily enough, and the strongest was that the heads of two sets of children were to be seen at the windows of both floors.

When he had satisfied himself with his outward inspection he crossed over, mounted the three or four steps, and rung the bell.

The door was opened by a not-over-tidy girl of fourteen or so.

"Hello!" exclaimed Harry, as though he had known her all his life. "Does Mr. Jonas Rundle live here?"

"Yes, he does," the girl snapped.

"Well, ye needn't take my head off, if he does," protested the boy, smiling.

The girl smiled too, and looked at Harry's well-washed face with something of interest.

A bootblack with a face so clean was an unusual sight, in Gotham, and she was inclined to improve the opportunity. Besides, Harry was good-looking.

"But, he ain't in," the girl informed.

"He's your dad, I take it?"

"Yes—my dad!" laughing.

"What does he do?"

"Trucks."

"And will he be in at noon?"

"Yes; he is 'most allus home to dinner."

"Then if you'll be perlite and ask me in I guess I'll wait till he comes."

Just then a shrill voice from the rear called out:

"You tell him we don't want nothin', M'rari Ann, and come in here and shut that door!"

"That yer mar?" asked Harry.

"Yes, that's mar!"

"Well, tell her I ain't got nothin' ter sell, but that I want ter see yer dad and must come in and wait."

"You M'rari Ann! Do you hear me?"

"Yes, mar; but, it ain't no peddler; it's a boy what wants ter wait and see par when he comes in."

In an instant a woman appeared in the hall from a rear door, with a baby in her arms and another very small child clinging to her dress, while her absence from the room caused a third child to set up a terrific squalling.

"You want ter see Jonas?" she demanded.

"Yes, ma'm, if ye please," answered Harry, respectfully.

"What ye want ter see him fer?"

"On business, mam."

"Well, I s'pose ye will have to come in and wait. Come right in here, boy, and excuse appearances."

Harry advanced down the hall, while the girl M'rari Ann closed the door, and in a second she followed him, and they entered the rear room.

Of all dirty holes Harry had ever seen in his life, this took the lead, he thought. There were no less than seven children present, of all sizes, three of which clung to the mother.

The floor, partly covered with what had once been a carpet, was as dirty as though it had not seen a broom in a month; the windows were too dirty to give a true view of the outside, and other things were in perfect keeping. It was a terrible looking hole.

Harry dropped his box to the floor and sat down upon it.

"Quite a family of ye," he observed, coolly.

"You'd think so, if you was in my shoes," complained the mother of the brood.

"Reckon I should. Reckon it won't come amiss when yer husband's daddy dies and leaves ye his sugar."

The woman opened her eyes wide.

"You mean that stingy and spooky old Matthias Rundle?" she demanded.

"The same," assured Harry.

"Never a cent of his money will we get. He has told Jonas so to his face."

"How's that?"

"Cause Jonas won't be a fool and be a spiritualist along with the rest of the cranks, that's all."

"That ain't much of a reason."

"Just what I tell Jonas; but, that's the way it stands."

"How is the old man goin' to help himself, if Mr. Rundle is his son?"

"Why, he has already willed it to some spirit society or other, to promote the advancement of spirits, or somethin' like that."

"A nice old man he is, then, ain't he; and he only got a day or two more ter live."

"What? What's that ye say?"

"He's goin' ter die."

"Is he sick?"

"Not as sick as he will be, I'm thinkin'."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Well, the spirits have sent him a message that he's got ter shuffle off the mortal twist, and I suppose they'd orter know."

"How came you to know this? Do you know Matthias Rundle?"

"You bet I know him! Nice old man he'd be, if he wasn't so batty on spooks. Thinks he's full of 'em, when it's only rats in his brain."

"What a boy you are! Who are you, and what has brought you here?"

"Well, it don't matter who I am; I'm only a kid of the gutter. What I'm here fer is ter tell Mr. Rundle his dad is likely ter kick the bucket, if spirits know all about it, and he'd better be lookin' out fer his interests."

"It won't be any use, for Jonas won't bother him."

"That will be his lookout, not mine. My dooty will be done and my spirit will rest easy."

And so Harry talked and talked, in a seemingly aimless manner, letting his tongue run away with him, as it appeared to be doing. The hour passed quickly and it was soon time for Jonas Rundle to appear.

Harry had picked up considerable information in a general way. He had learned that Jonas was the only near heir to the old man's money; that the old man was worth a good deal; that it was willed to some society; that Jonas and the old man had had words; and so forth.

Finally there came the thunder of heavy steps along the ball, and a man flung open the door of the miserable room.

Previous to this there had been a move toward getting dinner, in which the girl M'rari Ann had taken the leading role and done the biggest part of the work.

Inquisitor Harry had by this time reached the conclusion that in spite of all the drawbacks the children might be to her, Mrs. Rundle was chronically lazy. He had seen mothers with big families before, but never a den like this.

When the door opened the woman's face lengthened out into a melancholy droop of distress, a heavy sigh escaped her, and where she had been all smiles before at some of the boy's jokings, she was now more like a mourner at a funeral. The child in her arms and the two clinging to her skirts added weight to her apparent distress.

The man who opened the door was a big, bearded, hearty-looking person, who had the appearance of being a capital fellow under right conditions.

"Hullo!" he greeted.

The woman responded with a groan, the older children by clinging around his legs, except M'rari Ann and the next oldest, who looked on.

The light went out of his face as he looked at his wife and her clinging three, and took in at the same time the wretched condition of their surroundings.

"Such a life as mine is!" moaned the woman. "I wish I was dead and out of my misery, Jonas Rundle."

The man had just then taken in the fact that a stranger was present.

"Hello!" he cried again, "who is this?"

"This is me," answered Harry, getting up and flinging his box to his shoulder at the same time.

"Ani who the deuce is me? Speak up, youngster, and say what ye want here. Ye must be here on business, and nothin' of pleasure, I'll be bound."

"I'll be bound if you ain't right," admitted Harry. "There's a dry outlook for pleasure around here. Still, your comin' seemed ter knock what little there was all inter a cocked hat."

"What do ye mean?"

"Why, yer wife here; she was grinnin' like she was at a circus till you opened the door, and then if she didn't draw her mouth down t'other way and make a solumn enough face fer a graveyard visit. 'Scuse me fer mentionin' it."

Harry understood well enough what the situation was, and mentioned it on purpose.

The woman looked daggers at him, while the man broke into a merry laugh that showed how little he was offended.

"I allus thought there was two sides to her," he declared. "I can't never find that circus face on her any more myself. But, what do you want here, boy?"

"That brings me back to business. You are a son of Matthias Rundle, so your wife tells me."

"Yes."

"Well, the o'd gentleman is booked ter die, so the spirits tell, and I thought I'd drop around and let ye know so's you could look out fer your interests."

Jonas Rundle was interested at once, and dropping on a chair, engaged Harry in talk regardless of the fact that his miserable dinner was all the time growing cold, and he did not let the boy depart till he had got out of him all he was able and willing to tell regarding the business that had brought him there.

CHAPTER X.

BILLY SURPRISES RUNDLE.

HARRY was the first to reach home, after his interview with Jonas Rundle, and he boldly touched the button to ring the bell communicating with Mrs. Weston's rooms.

The door opened to him, and he went in and proceeded to the floor designated in the index, where he knocked.

"Come in!" Mrs. Weston called out cheerfully.

The boy entered boldly, doffing his hat as he stepped in.

"Goodness bless me!" cried Mrs. Weston, clasping her hands and staring at the boy.

The old ranger, Roger Watts, who was seated near a window, taking things easy with paper and pipe, looked on with considerable interest. But Mrs. Weston's emotion was more than interest.

"Goodness bless me!" she exclaimed again. "Who are you, boy? If you ain't the picture of what my Billy was!"

"Then you are Mrs. Weston?" Harry observed.

"Yes, and you must be the boy my son told me about."

"Reckon I am. I'm Happy Harry, partner-in-chief with Broadway Billy."

"Then you are the boy. How do you do, Harry? I suppose Billy sent you here to be one of us," and before Harry could divine what was coming, Mrs. Weston had put her motherly arms around him and given him a hearty kiss.

"Crackers an' cheese!" cried the lad, springing back in alarm. "What ye doin', ma'am?"

"What am I doing?" laughing. "Why, I had to kiss ye, because you look so much like Billy used to look. Besides, you must get used to that, if you are going to be my boy."

"Well, I suppose it's all right, but, it's somethin' new in my 'sprience. I have got more clubbin's than kissin's in my brief career so far. Don't be 'fended, Mrs. Weston; it's somethin' I ain't used to, ye know, and I didn't know but ye was goin' ter bite me."

Mrs. Weston and the old ranger laughed heartily, and Roger declared:

"Ef he ain't a second Billy, then I'm no jedge. Jest ther same kind of a boy, fer all ther world."

"The boss said he wanted me ter be Billy Number Two," announced Harry, "an' I may as well begin right off at once, I s'pose. Well, am I ter cast anker here, ma'm?"

"Why, certainly; this is to be your home just as long as Billy wants you to stay here, Harry. I hope you will like it, and will make yourself right at home and be just like one of us."

"All right; here goes, then!" and the gamin dropped his box on the floor and sat down on it, evidently thinking he was entering into the full enjoyment of home life.

"But, you can sit on a chair, I guess," urged Mrs. Weston. "Here, give me your hat, and put your box there in the bottom of that closet

while you are in the house, and you will know where to find it."

"Haven't got a bandbox handy, have ye?"

"A bandbox? What do you want with that?"

"Ye might put my hat in it," which suggestion caused the ranger to have a fit, almost.

Harry's hat was nothing but the shapeless remains of what had once been a hat.

"No, I haven't one quite good enough for this hat," answered Mrs. Weston. "I guess we had better see about a new one first, and the bandbox afterward. But, here comes my son; I know his step."

Billy was coming, true enough, and a moment later he opened the door.

He had a pass-key to admit himself at the street door, of course, and could enter at any time.

"Smoke o' Gittysburg!" exclaimed the old ranger. "You are bound ter be a man, anyhow, I see, me son. You went out this mornin' without a hair on yer face, and now ye come in with a mustache in full bloom."

"Goodness me!" cried Mrs. Weston. "It makes you look half a dozen years older, Billy. But, isn't he a fine-looking young man with it, Roger!"

"I should remark that he is, ma'm," was the approving response.

"That settles it," cried Billy. "Off it comes, I can't stand any such talk as that. Well, Harry, you are here, I see."

"You bet! I got through with business and thought I'd hustle right along and get here by the time you did. Seems I got here first. It's all the same as long as we are in time fer dinner."

"That's the main point. Well, what did you learn?"

"Bless me!" interrupted Mrs. Weston, "you haven't got business on hand a'ready, I hope."

"What do you want to hope that way for, mom?" Billy demanded. "Should think you would be tickled to think I've struck something the very first day."

"And you kin bet she is, and me too," averred old Roger. "What is it this time, me son? Have ye got after some more of them 'ar pizen rascals like you corralled the last time?"

Billy gave them an outline of the case in hand and by the time he had done, the dinner was served and they all took seats at the board.

While they were eating Billy learned what Harry had to tell, and after that gave an account of what he had been doing himself, greatly to the delight of Harry and the entertainment of the others.

"Well, what next in order?" asked Harry, when they rose.

"You know Brooser's place, don't you, down on—?"

"Cert."

"Well, it was there I met Gus Casmore, as I told you. I thought, perhaps, if you went down there you might pick up something more of interest to us, and so help along this shadow chase. But, Harry, it is a bad hole, at best, so you must be wary and keep out of danger if you can."

"Oh! I will, you bet, if I kin, but I won't promise, sure, as to that. Sometimes there's fun galore in sich places w'en the cops don't chip in and spile things."

When they left the house, finally, each set off in a different direction. Broadway Billy to the home of Matthias Rundle, to keep his appointment with him.

Arriving there, a ring at the bell brought to the door an old woman, whom Billy recognized at once as the housekeeper, of whom Mr. Rundle had spoken.

"Is Mr. Rundle in?"

"What name, if you please?" was the counter-question.

"William Weston."

"Yes, sir; he is in. Come right this way, if you please."

She led the way down the hall and stopped at a rear door, where she tapped lightly and then opened the door.

Mr. Rundle was disclosed, sitting in a reclining chair near a window that was partly darkened, and the woman, speaking Billy's name, withdrew as soon as the young detective had entered, closing the door.

"You are here, eh?"

"As you see," answered Billy.

"Well, come this way and take a seat near me, and we will talk."

Billy complied, drawing a chair close to the reclining chair, and seating himself so he could see Mr. Rundle's face well.

"What do you think by this time?" the old man asked.

"Well, I have been able to learn a little, sir."

"What have you learned?"

"I have learned one important truth."

"And what is that?"

"That you are being cleverly and successfully swindled."

The old man's face took on a look of alarm, but quickly assumed a smile of half-pity.

"I feared that would be your idea, before you had investigated at all. You men of the world are so matter-of-fact in everything."

"I am in possession of proof for what I assert."

Again the look of alarm.

"What is the proof?"

"I am not prepared to reveal it yet."

"Then how am I to believe you have what you claim? Are you not guessing at it all?"

"Not a bit. I am guided by facts. Suppose I tell you some things I am aware of, and see if that will convince you."

"Very well."

"In the first place, you are acquainted with a woman named Rosa Dubarre."

"Hai bow do you know that?"

"Through very material means, I assure you. More, this woman has recently informed you that you are soon to die, and that you had better set your house in order, as it were."

The old man, greatly excited, sat bolt upright on his chair, staring at Billy with eyes dilated. Here was something, not of spirit nature, and yet that rivaled anything in that line he had recently observed. How knew this detective so much?

CHAPTER XI.

BILLY OPENS RUNDLE'S MATERIAL EYES.

"TELL me how you know that," Rundle demanded. "Tell me how you found that out. I demand to know."

"Detectives do not tell just how they learn what they know in a certain matter," Billy evaded. "Let it be enough that I do know it. Perhaps it will convince you that I may be able to learn more."

"Hum! Hum! Hum!"

The old man had not his cane in hand, but he rapped with his hand on the arm of his chair.

"Spirits?" asked Billy.

Not that he believed the spirits had anything to do with it.

"Hey! Oh! yes, yes; spirits, of course."

"Approving what I said?"

"Hum! I'll ask them. Spirit is mighty; matter is nothing. Often the spirits use my arm many time, before I notice them at all. They never communicate until attention is gained."

"Never mind asking them now," said Billy. "Let us confine our talk for the present to substantial things. You intend going to Madam Dubarre's seance to-night, do you not?"

"Heavens and earth! Young man, do you know anything more?"

"Perhaps."

"Well, yes, I intend going there."

"And perhaps you will be allowed to hold conversation with your dead daughter."

"I certainly hope it will be my privilege."

"And, in view of the short time you have to live, she may suggest in what manner you shall dispose of your worldly goods."

"Hum! Hum! Hum!"

"Why not? What would be more natural?"

"I haven't said anything to the contrary, have I?"

"Nq; but you hum over it a good deal."

"Are you not aware, young man, that there are spirits of evil as well as spirits of good?"

"I have known that for a considerable time past," Billy declared. "And I am of the opinion that there are spirits of evil in this case of yours."

"So I think, sir; so I think. Why this unworthy doubt in my mind, if not put there by a spirit of evil? I know I am going to die within a few days, and why should I not listen to the spirit of my dear child and dispose of my money in time?"

"Why not will it to your son?"

"To an unbeliever!"

"Yes. Let him believe or not, he is your son just the same."

"But, the spirits would never approve of that, sir. We of the faith must be first for the cause."

"How about asking the spirit of your daughter about it?"

"I might do that, I suppose."

"You like your son well enough, don't you?"

"I would love him, would he only open his eyes and accept the truth."

"But, as he won't, you allow him to drive his truck daily, in all kinds of weather, while you have money enough in your strong box to set him up nicely in business, and plenty to spare."

"Look here, young man, what did I engage you for?"

"Because your hoss-sense was beginning to rise above spirit tom-foolery, and you had a suspicion that maybe you were being gulled of your guilders."

Billy allowed himself to drop into his natural oddity of expression, for he was more than half disgusted with the old gentleman, to think he could be so blind as to let these spiritual sharks rob him so easily.

"If you were anybody else," the old man cried, slapping the arm of his chair with more than spiritual force, "I would order you from my presence and my house at once. As it is I must allow for your youth. You call spiritualism tom-foolery! Have a care how you talk."

"There may be something in the faith, for all I know," Billy admitted, "but I know there is nothing in this particular case of yours but an attempt to swindle you out of the last dollar you possess."

"How dare you!"

"Because I know what I am talking about, sir."

"Can you prove it?"

"That is just what I am going to undertake to do, sir."

"Well, prove it, then."

"I need your help."

"My help? In what manner can I help you?"

"Well, in the first place, by not letting on that I have confirmed the suspicion you felt."

"That is easily granted. I have no intention of making myself ridiculous by making known to the brethren and sisters that I am so weak-minded as to have any doubt in the matter."

"Good enough. Remain perfectly firm, and do not let it be known that you have a suspicion. That, however, is known; but, you can make it believed that your suspicion has been brushed away."

"You say my suspicion is known? To whom is it known?"

"To Rosa Dubarre."

"Impossible!"

"Not so impossible as you think. She has been spying on your track of late, and followed you to my office this morning."

The old man gasped, but could not speak a word.

"It is just as I tell you," Billy went on. "She followed you there, and when she heard you coming down the stairs she ran up the street a little distance, and then returned to meet you."

The old man made an effort to say something, but was still speechless.

"And who is this Rosa Dubarre?" Billy demanded. "What do you know of her, outside of her spiritual seances? I'll tell you who and what she is. She is a crook of the first water, and her picture is in the rogues' gallery. She is fleecing you in the neatest way imaginable."

"Impossible!" cried the old man, breaking out at last.

"Is it impossible? You just go to headquarters and ask the chief to show you picture Number —, and tell you the woman's history, that is all."

It must not be imagined that Billy was talking in tones loud enough for any one outside of the room to overhear, and the old man naturally falling into the same tone, they were safe from eavesdroppers.

Billy had suspicions deeper than we have yet set forth.

"There must be some mistake," the old man gasped.

"I assure you there is no mistake, sir," said Billy. "I have got a dead sure case against the fair Rosa and her ally Gus Casmore."

"Casmore! You know of him, too?"

"Yes; he is another of the same stripe. Mr. Rundle, I have laid the bare facts before you. Do you want to go on and unmask these scamps in their evil work? Or do you prefer to allow them to swindle you further under the miserable mask which they wear of spirit influence and presence?"

The old gentleman was fairly panting in his excitement.

"Is it possible!" he gasped, each word standing alone and distinct. "Have I been made a dupe of in this matter? It does not seem possible—Heavens! young man, it is not possible!"

"It is the bare, naked truth, sir—just as sure as you and I are here."

"But, the spirit of my dead daughter—there can be no swindle about *that* part of it."

"My opinion is that it is a humbug from beginning to end, sir—a bald, bald humbug, nothing less."

"My dead Betty's spirit a humbug!"

"Oh! no; I suppose Betty's spirit is all right; but I don't believe it is in the habit of coming to you and telling you to deliver your money into the hands of these miserable crooks. Do you?"

The old man bowed his head in thought.

"I cannot understand it," he mused aloud. "Who but the spirit of my daughter could remind me of things which no one but she and I knew? And this has been done at these seances of Madam Dubarre."

"We shall find out all about that, sir. It will be explained somehow, and in a perfectly material manner, too. Now, a word about that will you made, and which is missing. You declined to say much about it at the office."

"What do you want to know about it?"

"I want facts, sir, and nothing else. Who would have the most interest in stealing it from you, your son or these good spiritualists?"

"Young man, young man, are you determined to shatter my faith in everything it has been firmly fixed upon for many years?"

"I want to knock out all these spiritual props that are not the genuine article, sir. And, your answer in that manner answers my question fully. You suspect the spiritual frauds more than your son."

"I'll make a confession to you, Mr. Weston."

"What is it, sir?"

"My will was made in favor of my son, with only a fair sum given to a society of spiritualists here in the city."

"Ha! now I begin to see daylight ahead. You were urging your son to become a spiritualist, and even while you threatened to cut him off, you had already made your will in his favor."

"Yes."

"That was a cute trick. Now, who knew about this will besides yourself?"

"My lawyer, and my old housekeeper, who witnessed it. The other witness is dead; died some years ago. The will is not a recent one."

"How long has it been missing?"

"A year or so."

"It was missing after you made the acquaintance of this woman Dubarre."

"Yes, yes."

"Exactly. Speak still in low tones, please. Have I opened your material eyes sufficiently for you to see the truth?"

"Yes, yes; and may Heaven blight these infamous knaves for the evil they have done."

"Amen! to that, sir. Now, a few words more and I will go. I am going to be at the seance to-night."

"You?"

"Yes. I have made the acquaintance of Casmore, and he will introduce me. He thinks I am a greeny from the country, with considerable money, and he is going to relieve me of it if he can. Now, you must go there, just as you intended; do not let it be seen that you know anything against them; fall in readily with whatever they want you to do; and do not let on that you know me. And now, call your housekeeper and tell her to show me the door. Pretend rage, and say I have tried to make you believe false things. Do not, however, say one word to her, of the truth. Do you understand?"

It had taken considerable time and considerable talk for Billy to impress it all on the old man's mind, but at last it was understood fully, and calling the housekeeper, the old gentleman directed her to show the visitor out, seeming in a hot rage.

CHAPTER XII.

CHATTERBOX HARRY CHATTERS.

WHEN the old housekeeper had closed the door after Billy, she returned to the room where Mr. Rundle was.

"What was he trying to do, sir?" she asked. "I will remember his face, if he ever dares to come here again. Shall I have him arrested, if he does?"

"Hum! Hum! Hum!" the old gentleman grunted, seeming likely to choke in a well-feigned choleric fit. "The rascal! Wanted to make me believe our faith is a humbug!"

"Can it be possible! I'll scald him, if he comes here again, if you say so, Mr. Rundle."

"Yes, give it to him! I'll teach him a lesson, if he bothers me again with his lying nonsense!"

"What did he tell you?"

"Why, I have been weak, and this is the fruits of it."

"You have been weak, you say? You mean weak in the faith? I am sorry to hear that."

"I suppose you will call it that. So I call it, now. I wanted to know what use was made of the money Betty's spirit came for each week."

"Awful! As if you could not trust your dear child unquestioned."

"Exactly, and I see it now."

"And what of the young man?"

"I consulted him, and he suggested the possibility of my being imposed upon and swindled."

"Worse and worse!"

"Yes, you are right."

"And what did you tell him?"

"I ordered him out, as you saw."

"And then you don't believe his lies?"

"How can I? He declared Betty's spirit was a fraud."

"The—the—I can't find a name bad enough for him. As if you would not know better than that."

"So I told him. Hasn't the dear child told me of things which only she and I knew? How could an impostor do anything like that?"

"How, indeed!"

"Yes, I have been weak, but I'll repent of it in sackcloth and ashes. No matter what the next demand is, it shall be granted, even if it is to give up my last dollar and become an object of public charity."

"Nobly spoken, sir, nobly spoken."

"I have not told you the latest."

"What is it, sir?"

"I am going to die."

"Die!"

"Yes, and soon. Betty has revealed it to the society. I was told of it this morning very gently by Miss Dubarre."

"Oh! is it possible! I am so sorry to hear it; and yet, ought we not rather rejoice? We know it is only a harmless change into a better condition. It is nothing that can hurt."

"I know it, I know it. I am resigned. It is a dreaded thing to meet, but it cannot be avoided. And, now, being aware of it, I can feel that I am growing more and more feeble. The change is coming soon, I know. For that reason I have a work to do in the world."

"And what is that?"

"To obey Betty's last request, no matter what it may be."

"Yes, that is true."

"I am going to the meeting to-night, and it may be the last one I shall ever attend. I feel that critical results will follow."

"It is possible, sir."

"You have been a good housekeeper for me, and I shall not forget you. When I am gone you will find something laid away for you. That is yours alone, and cannot be given to the society."

"I had rather see it go that way, sir."

"No, that is yours; but, everything else is to go as Betty may direct."

They talked for some minutes longer, in about the same strain, when the old man requested the woman to leave him, saying he desired to be alone.

She withdrew, and as soon as she had gone a smile lighted the old man's face and to himself he muttered:

"Well, well, the seed has been sown, and if that young man's suspicion is correct it cannot help bearing fruit. We shall see, we shall see."

He lapsed into thoughtful silence.

In the mean time what of Happy Harry?

Separating from Billy, he laid his course in the direction of the low saloon Billy had mentioned.

"Crackers an' cheese!" he exclaimed, as he went along, "but I would like ter do somethin' ter make myself useful in this case. Seems ter me I ain't gittin' there the same as the 'riginal Billy used ter do. Wonder what's the matter? Guess it must be because I ain't got any inner workin's in my think-box."

What he was going to do, or what he could do, did not make itself clear to him.

He recalled what he had read of the adventures of his model, and tried to fit some of them to the present case, but not with much success.

There seemed to be a difference all around, and the one wedge that would not seem to apply anywhere was himself. And the more he thought about it the less he believed he was going to fill the bill.

"No use talkin'," was his final comment, as he neared his destination, "this business and me ain't goin' ter fit. I ain't a Broadway Billy, not by any means, and never will be. Now, if it was Billy himself, he would 'a' had this beast by the tail, and would 'a' yanked him out of his lair by this time, and spilled him all over the street. Why is it I can't do the same? 'Cause it ain't in me, that's all."

From this, it can be seen he was not in a very confident mood when he reached the neighborhood of Brooser's dive.

As he drew near he observed Gus Casmore standing in front of the place idly picking his teeth.

"Shine, sir? Shine?"

So Happy Harry cried, unslinging his box and preparing for business.

"Yes, I don't mind if ye do," responded the tough, and he braced himself against a post and lifted his foot.

Harry was upon his knees in a moment, his box was in position, and his brushes were plying away with all the rapidity the skilled expert's hand could lend.

"What's your name, boy?" the customer inquired.

"Bob Jinks," was the gamin's prompt answer.

"You don't belong around here; never seen ye afore."

"I uther be down by the bridge, but I had ter move out o' that."

"How was that? The police chase you away? Mebby your fingers got too light in the pockets of the crowd."

"No, 't wasn't that; 'twas jest spooks!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Speerits."

"What the dickens are you talking about? Are you crazy?"

"No, I guess not; but you asked me a question and I'm allus willin' ter answer civil questions with flush facks."

"Well, just explain yourself, 'will you?'

A sudden idea had come to Happy Harry, and taking pattern after Billy, he was acting upon it.

He knew this fellow was at present interested in spiritual matters, and he thought a little fiction in the same line might lead to a conversation. It seemed his idea was about right.

"Give me yer other foot," Harry invited, having finished one.

It was promptly given, and again the fellow urged for an explanation of what the boy had said.

"Why, it got too spooky around there," Harry enlightened, "and I had ter give up a good snap and mosey out, that's all."

"That ain't what I want to know, though, boy. In what way did it get spooky? Did you see ghosts around there? Come, you have interested me in this thing."

"Mebby you're a reporter," Harry remarked. "I'd jest like ter show that old codger up in print."

"What old codger?"

"The man that spooked me."

"Well, maybe Iam a reporter, my boy."

"Crackers an' cheese! Are ye, though? Then I'll tell ye all about it. Ye see, this old codger, don't know his name, he used ter look at me hard when he'd cross the bridge, and every time he did that I'd go off."

"Go off?"

"Yes; get spooky, you know. I would seem to go out of myself, and couldn't do nothin' only what he told me. Then he'd make me talk, and I don't know but he made capital out of the information he got out of me."

The tough whistled.

"Is this the truth, boy?" he demanded.

"If you knowed me you wouldn't have ter ask that," Harry answered.

"There may be something in this, boy," the rascal said thoughtfully. "How long has it been going on?"

"Long enough fer me to get enough of it, you bet. I wouldn't go to the bridge at this time o' day fer half a dollar, you bet on that."

"Why, is this about the time the old gent is there?"

"Yes, about now or a little later. There ye are, sir; flip me yer nickel."

"Here's a dime this time. I want to talk with you a little more about this matter. Won't you come in here?"

"Time is money ter me," objected Harry.

"Oh! hang that. I'll tip you a quarter when you have told me your story out in full."

"All right, on them condibuns I'll be yer calla lily, every time. I'll tell ye all about it, and in short meet 'er, too."

Gus Casmore led the way into the saloon, Harry following him and congratulating himself heartily upon the success of his simple ruse. What was going to come of it, anyhow?

Once within, the tough seated himself at a table, pushing a chair for Harry at the same time, and called for something to drink, of which he invited the boy to partake. But, that was

useless, for the gamin would have none of it; and, while the man drank and smoked Harry unwound fiction to him by the yard. And not without making a lasting impression, either. The boy was doing better than he could have dreamed of.

CHAPTER XIII.

HARRY'S SUPREME EFFORT.

GUS CASMORE was a fellow who, in spite of his being the rascal he was, and of being concerned in spirit frauds, so to say, had some belief in spiritualism.

Not that he understood it, but for the reason that he did not understand he believed to a certain extent. He believed, for instance, that Rosa Dubarre, in spite of all, was really a medium.

If that was so, she was the medium of evil spirits rather than good ones, but that made no difference to Gus Casmore.

So, when Happy Harry had told his story, and he had made it a strong one, too, Casmore believed it fully. He believed there was something in it more than the boy was able to tell, and certainly more than he could fathom.

"Say," he suddenly spoke.

"Well, say on," Harry invited.

"Let's go to the bridge. I'd like to see you in one of these spells."

"Nixey! Not fer half a dollar!"

"I'll give you a dollar if you will go. I'm interested in this thing, and maybe I can put you in the way of making money."

"How's that?"

"Why, I believe you are a medium, that is, a fellow the spirits can talk to, and if you are, you needn't blacken boots any more for a livin', that is sure."

"I'm yer joker, right from the pack. Give me yer dollar and I'll go if it kills me. I want ye to promise one thing, though."

"What is that?"

"That you'll watch out fer me if we see the old fellow, and he throws me into one of the spells."

"I'll do that, sure; but, how do you mean?"

"Why, see that I don't git killed, maltreated, run in, nor nothin' of that kind; and see that I don't do nothin' I hadn't orter do."

"All right; I promise that, Bob."

"Let's go right off, then, fer it's near his time ter 'pear now. Reckon you will say you would steer clear of the old fellow, too, if you see me in a spell."

They left the saloon and set off at once in the direction of the bridge.

Happy Harry was highly elated now at the success he had had with his victim, for such the tough certainly was.

When they reached the entrance to the great bridge, Harry came to a stop and drew aside out of the way of the crowd, Casmore with him.

"We'll stop right here," Harry said, "and I'll see him if he 'pears."

"All right; let me know when he's coming, and I'll try and see how he works the spell on you."

They waited, for the most part in silence, and Harry was hoping some old man would happen along whom he might make use of for his purpose.

Finally an aged man did appear, stepping slowly up the steps to the entrance gates, and as he did so he cast a glance in the direction of the place where Harry and Gus Casmore stood.

He went on, and the tough turned to Harry.

"Was that him?" he asked.

But, Harry was staring straight ahead, his eyes fixed on nothing.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Casmore, excitedly, "it was him, sure enough, and he has fixed the boy!"

He looked after the old man, who had now passed the gates and was making his way to a waiting car, innocent of the attention that was being paid to him.

Casmore turned again to Harry, shaking his arm.

"Come, rouse up!" he called. "What's come over you?"

Harry's gaze remained fixed, though, and he did not seem to hear a word that was said to him.

"This beats the deuce," the tough muttered. "I must take this boy and let Rosa Dubarre see him, if it can be done. How the deuce am I going to get him out of it?"

Stepping in front of Harry, he looked squarely into his eyes.

"Boy, do you know me?" he asked.

"Gus Casmore," answered Harry, slowly and apparently mechanically.

"By thunder!" the tough ejaculated, "how

could he know my name? This is something more than I can understand. I'll try him a little while he is in the trance."

Again he fixed his eyes on Harry's.

"Where am I going to-night?" he asked. Harry hesitated; then came the answer, slowly, quietly, mechanically:

"To the seance at Rosa Dubarre's. You have something important on hand there to-night."

The fellow gave vent to an ejaculation that was very like an oath.

"How is it to be accounted for?" he asked himself. "This gets ahead of my time. I'll put another to him."

"What is the important business I have on hand?" he asked, having again put his eyes on line with those of the boy. And he appeared excited as he awaited the reply.

The answer came in the same manner as before.

"You are going for the money of Matthias Rundle," was the answer. "You will tell him what to do with it, as he is going to die. It is important, and you will be successful. Rosa gets the biggest share."

This was said in a tone altogether unlike Harry's natural tone, and still the boy's eyes remained fixed on nothing.

Gus Casmore could only stare in open-mouthed amazement.

"This beats the fakirs!" he cried. "I never saw anything like it. No wonder the lad changed his quarters. He must be a subject easy to handle, when the old man merely glanced at him and nothing more. He has got to go to Rosa's, if I have to take him there by force, that's flat."

Again he shook Harry, trying to bring him out of the spell into which he had been thrown.

It took several shakings to accomplish it, however, but when the boy did come to it was as suddenly as he had gone off into the spell.

"What's the matter?" he asked, as he rubbed his eyes and looked around him in a foolish way.

"Come on with me, and we'll go back," answered Casmore.

He took Harry by the arm and led him away.

"Was I in a spell?" asked the little impostor.

"I should say you was. Didn't you see the old man?"

"Yes, yes; that's so! He looked at me, didn't he? That was the last I remember about it."

"Don't you remember what you said?"

"What I said? Did I talk?"

"You know what my name is, don't you?"

"How should I know yer name when ye haven't told me what it is."

"Well I'll be ham-strung!" the fellow cried.

"What did I say?" Harry asked, as if interested.

"You told me what my name is, for one thing. This is more than I can understand. You have knocked me clear out."

"Well, that's the kind of spells that old codger throws me into, and do you wonder that I don't care fer hang around there where he kin get his awful eye on me? I guess not."

"No, I should say not. But, Bob, see here: I have got an offer to make you, and I don't want you to say no."

"What is it? Any seads in it?"

"Have you ever heard of Rosa Dubarre, the spiritualist?"

"Rosa Dubarre? Who's she?" demanded the pretender.

"Wonderful, wonderful," muttered Casmore.

"Well, she is a woman who is a great spiritualist, and I believe you are a wonderful medium, though you don't know it. Now if you will go with me to this woman's house she will test you, and if you are good she will pay you well every night she has a seance."

"What does she want ter see aunts fer?"

"You don't understand me. That means that she calls on the spirits to come and talk with their living friends."

"Oh! that's it, eh?"

"Yes; and if you prove a good medium they will talk through you, and Rosa will pay you well, as I said."

"I'm Rosa's own Bob, then," Harry declared. "Escort me to her palace, and I will see if I can't work up a ghost or two just to make it lively."

"All right; we'll go there. Come along."

Changing their direction, Casmore led the way to a station of the Elevated, and in a few minutes they were spinning away toward up-town.

"I don't look very nice fer makin' calls on ladies," Harry remarked as they rode along.

"No matter about that; and I guess Rosa had rather see you just as you are than togged out in your Sunday best."

"Crackers an' cheese! She will have ter see me just as I am, or not at all. This is the best and all I've got. I'm no Jay Gould in disguise, you bet!"

It did not seem long till they were at their destination.

It was well up-town, and a short walk from the station brought them to the house of the clever Rosa.

A ring at the bell brought a servant promptly to the door, and a word from Casmore admitted them to the house, where they were soon in the presence of the woman Dubarre.

"What have you there?" she immediately demanded.

"A diamond in the rough," was the answer.

"He's a boy with a natural tendency to go off."

"To go off—"

"To go into a trance. I saw him in one less than half an hour ago."

"What do you mean? Come, tell me all about him, and why you have brought him here to me. I don't want him, I'm sure."

"I think you'll change your mind, when I tell you about him."

"Well, tell me, and we'll see."

And tell her, Casmore did, giving the full particulars of his meeting with Harry, and all that had taken place subsequently.

The woman listened with much interest, and when he had done, asked:

"Did you know the old man?"

"No; never saw him before."

"He must be a great mesmerist. I'll try the boy in that line."

"Don't you go ter burtin' me," cried Harry, at once. "And don't ye put me in no spell that ye can't bring me out of, either, mind that."

"Oh no; don't have any fears about that."

Harry laid aside his box, and the woman placing him on a chair made some passes before his face with her hands.

It was not long when Harry sunk back, his eyes fixed and staring, and Casmore was quick to declare he was gone. And then followed some experiments.

Harry answered questions, and made revelations which they knew it was impossible for him to have any knowledge about, or so they thought, at any rate; and altogether he passed a most satisfactory examination.

CHAPTER XIV.

BILLY'S SECOND TAKES LESSONS.

HARRY certainly had remarkable command of emotions. Here he was, playing off under the very eyes of these shrewd and experienced adventurers, and they unable to suspect it!

With the knowledge he had of them, he could answer questions in the most surprising manner, and they marveled greatly at what, in spite of all their pretensions, they could not understand.

"What do you make of it?" Casmore asked.

"I know not what to make of it," the woman answered.

"Can you understand it?"

"No, I cannot."

"It's a plain case, and no fake about it this time."

"You are right. There is more in this business than we have ever been able to make out."

"Well, can you make use of the boy, do you think?"

"I'll be afraid to try it."

"Why?"

"He tells too much that is true."

"Yes; but can't we post him and have him play off?"

"Think he'd do it?"

"He'll do it fast enough, if the bait is big."

"All right, we'll try him as soon as he comes out of this dream."

"Bring him out of it."

"I'll try it."

The woman made some passes before Harry's face as before, and presently the boy came to with a start.

"Where am I?" he demanded, sitting up and rubbing his eyes.

"Don't you know where you are?" asked Casmore. "Don't you know me?"

"Oh! is that you? What's been the matter with me? Have I been off again? Guess I have."

"Yes, you have been in another spell."

"A fine statue of Apoller I am, ain't I. Guess I must lack a button or two somewhere. I'll be afraid ter trust myself anywhere, if this thing keeps on."

"Do you remember anything I asked you?" inquired the woman.

"Nary a thing," Harry fibbed readily. "Was you askin' questions of ther oracle?"

"Yes; and you gave some remarkable answers, too."

"Guess they must 'a' been 'markable, when I was out of my head. Seems ter me I've been off on a journey somewhere. How long was I in the spell?"

"Oh, only a few minutes."

"Seems it was a day or two."

"Well, Bob, how would you like to work for this lady at good pay?" asked the man.

"What ter do?" Harry demanded.

"Let her experiment on you, the same as she has done now."

"What d'ye call good pay?"

"Well, say two dollars a day and your keep."

"Nixey! It's a poor day that I don't pick up two dollars with my box, and my keep besides."

"How would four dollars suit you?" the woman asked.

"Now you're talkin'. I'm yer tally-wally at that figger."

"And can you stay here now?"

"Does the pay begin now?"

"Yes."

"Then consider me a fixture."

The pair had to smile at Harry's quick and sharp responses.

"Very well," spoke the woman. "It is agreed. Now, I must have a talk with you and see if you can do what is required of you."

"Crackers an' cheese! I thought I filled the bill anyhow."

"Well, maybe you do, but we must be sure of it, you know. I am giving you big pay and I must have good service."

"Of course."

"Do you think you could make believe go into one of these spells, and tell a few things purposely?"

"Well, yes, if I could keep from laffin', and mebby I could do that. I'm not very easily tickled, anyhow. Never had much 'casion ter laugh."

"If you did that it would spoil everything."

"And I'd be out my four dollars!"

"To be sure."

"Then you'd never ketch me laffin'. The thought of losin' that money would make me as sober as Jedge Duffy."

"Let me see you make believe go into a spell."

"Crackers an' cheese! You will hev ter tell me how I act, so's I'll be able ter work up the counterfeit."

"Well, you drop back, fix your eyes straight ahead, and talk rather slow and steady like. Something like this."

The woman gave illustration.

"I guess I can do that all right," averred the boy. "See if this comes anywhere near it."

He placed himself in the position he had been in at first, and stared at nothing, the only difference being that purposely, he did not hold his eyes quite so steadily.

To have done so might have aroused suspicion.

"That will do very well," the woman decided. "Now answer me a question, in the most solemn way you can speak. The voice must not be like your own if you can help it, you know."

"Ask yer question."

"Well, how are you to-day, my little man?"

"So's to be able ter set up and take my meals, thank ye," was the answer, in slow and measured tones.

"The tone is all right," said Madame Du-barre, "but not the language. You must talk as near like polite folks talk as you can, you know; not say 'so's,' and 'ter,' and like that, you see. Try again."

"Ye don't take me fer a p'fessor o' langwidge in a college, do ye?" the boy demanded.

"No; but don't talk quite as you do on the street. Now, try again. Who is going to be our next President?"

"As near as I am able ter—I mean to kalky-ate, it will be the man that gets the most votes and the squarest count. Don't you think so?"

"That is a little better, but still that will not do."

"What's ther diffiklty now?"

"You are inclined to make a joke of your replies. You must appear to be in real earnest."

"Well, try it again."

Harry fixed himself for another test.

"Now, spirit, when am I going to die? Can you tell me that?"

"You will die on the Twenty-first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine."

This was better. In fact, it was said so well that the woman paled for a second and looked to see if the boy had not really gone off into one of his spells. He had not, however.

"How was that?" Harry demanded.

"Splendid!" was the compliment. "That is just what I want."

"All right, then, I guess I can fill the bill for you, if you don't ask me anything too funny."

"Nothing funny will be asked, I assure you. Do you think he will answer the purpose, Gus?"

"Finely," was the answer. "Keep him, by all means."

"We will."

"There's only one thing fer ye ter look out fer," warned Harry.

"And what is that?"

"You must take care not ter put me off inter a real spell, or no knowin' what I might tell."

"Oh! there is no danger of that, for I will not attempt to mesmerize you, and you are not likely to go off, as you call it, unless some influence is brought to bear upon you."

"Mebby not."

"And now are you ready for your lesson?"

"Yes, let's have it, and see that ye drill it inter my thick head mighty well, so it won't leak out."

"I guess there is little danger of your forgetting your part. Remember, your pay depends on the correctness with which you do your act."

"That's so. I'll grip it, you bet."

"Now, pay attention, and listen well to what I say. To-night, as it is arranged, there will be a spiritual seance here, and perhaps a good many persons will be present. You must not let that confuse or frighten you, however."

"Numbers don't interfere with my nerve," boasted the boy.

"That is well. Now, among these will be an old man named Matthias Rundle. I will speak his name so that you will know him when he comes. It is to interest him I want you to take part. You understand? Well, I want you to make believe the spirit of his dead daughter is in you, talking to him, and you must say what I shall arraige for you to say. Do you see?"

"I guess I git hold of it, ma'm."

"Very well. You must make believe go off into a spell, just as you have done now, and then talk and answer questions. I will do the questioning myself, and you will know what answer I want you to make by the way in which I ask the question. I shall drill you on that this afternoon until I have you perfect. Then, too, you must have a good deal of knowledge about Mr. Rundle's affairs, so you will be able to make him believe it is really the spirit of his daughter who is talking to him. I can give you all that knowledge."

"Guess I kin do it, if it ain't put on too heavy. I used ter spout lines from plays that I picked up at theaters, when I dropped in sometimes and chawed peanuts with the other kids in the loft."

"I have no doubt but you will answer the purpose well. If you do real well, and make no mistakes, I will give you five dollars instead of four, and I'll give you the full pay for this half-day, too. You must not make any mistakes, for that would spoil everything, you know."

"Bet I don't make a singlo flop, then. I'm goin' fer that fiver, or bu'st in tryin' ter git that."

"Do you think he'll do, Gus?"

"Yes, I believe he's going to be the best decoy yet," was the assurance.

There was a long talk, then, between the man and woman, in which their plans were laid. Casmore told her about the young stranger he was going to bring that night, and it was all talked over freely in the presence of the boy.

And then after the departure of Casmore, the woman began to drill the decoy on the lessons he had to learn, in which the lad made the most gratifying progress. The remainder of the afternoon, without interruption, was given up to that business, with a persistence worthy of a much better cause.

CHAPTER XV.

BROADWAY BILLY SURPRISED.

WHEN Broadway Billy left the residence of Matthias Rundle, he paid another visit to Headquarters.

Not that he had any particular business there, but he felt that he owed it to the chief to report progress on the case, and had to kill time somehow until the hour for his meeting with Gus Casmore.

He was welcomed, of course, and when he had made known what he had been doing, it was a great satisfaction to find that he had the approval of his patron. And when he came away, finally, he had some valuable suggestions in mind given him by one who had had so many years' experience in the detective field.

From there Billy went to his office.

There was no evidence that any one had been there, and no communication was found in the door letter-box.

"Reckon many a day will pass with no callers," the young man mused. "I have got to make a bigger name than I have already, I s'pose. But then, I am being helped, and I suppose a good many cases will be put in my way till I get a footing and can command attention on my own merit."

Opening his office dresser, he took out a new disguise and put it on.

When he had done this he appeared as a man, with a full beard, and so well was the beard fitted, that it would require a very close inspection to discover the cheat.

He was well dressed, but not in the height of fashion by any means, and looked not unlike a prosperous man of business from some country town. Billy could take on age or lay it off at pleasure, and could play either man or boy.

In this outfit he looked to be about thirty years old, and being broad of shoulder and strong of neck and limb, he was every inch a man, and of no small bodily proportions, either. He was a man, yet with a face so boyish and beardless as to deceive any one who did not know him.

Locking his office again, he paid a visit to the home of Jonas Rundle.

He found things there about as Happy Harry had found them in the morning, but Jonas was not at home.

Inquiring where he might probably be found, Billy went for him, and found Jonas with his truck waiting for a load from the place where he was employed.

"You are Jonas Rundle?" Billy asked.

"That's my name," was the answer.

"Son of Matthias Rundle?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you are the man I wanted to find."

"Well, you have found me; what do you want?"

"A little talk with you that will be of interest to you."

"What about?"

"Your father's property."

"Ha! what do you know about his property? Who are you, anyhow?"

Billy had drawn the man aside from the others while he talked, and now that they were alone, said:

"My name is Weston; I am a detective. I am working up a case to cheat a set of rascals out of getting hold of your father's money. You can help me a little, and I can help you a good deal."

"I don't know about that. The old man is dead set against me, and won't have anything to do with me because I won't be a spiritualist."

"That is the front he has presented to you, I know, but I know something that lies behind it all. Your father's will was made in your favor, leaving you the bulk of his property."

"The deuce you say! How did you find that out?"

"Your father told me so, himself."

"Well, I can't understand it. He has always declared I shouldn't handle a cent of his money unless I would be a spiritualist."

"That was only to try to force you to become one. Now, that will has been stolen, and it stands to reason that you do not know anything about it. The question is, where is the will?"

"I give it up."

"Can you tell me anything about that old housekeeper of your father's?"

"Ha! I'll bet you are on the right track, sir. That woman is a deep one, if there ever was one. I know something about her."

"What do you know?"

"Well, I know she is not the innocent old lady she looks to be."

"That hardly answers the question. Can you tell me anything about her which you positively know?"

"Yes, I can do that, too, but it will be no use telling the old man so. He would not believe it. He sees nothing that isn't spiritual, so to call it."

"I don't know about that. He is getting his material eyes opened wonderfully, and I think he'll be able to see things in their right light pretty soon. But, what is it you know about the woman?"

"She has a daughter in this town who is none too good."

"Who is she?"

"Oh! there's no telling what name she is under now. She was sent up once, and her picture is in the rogues' gallery."

"Can you tell me any name she was ever known by?"

"Yes, she was once called Fairy Fingers."

"Sweet pertaters!"

"What you say?"

"I have my eye on that damsel now, and if she isn't concerned in this case I miss my guess. In fact I know she is, and I'm going to have her, too."

"Well, what is the case, and what are they trying to do to the old man?"

Billy gave the son an outline of what was going on, and needless to say Jonas was interested.

"Did you ever tell your father about this woman's daughter?" Billy asked.

"I started to tell him once, but he reminded me that the mother could not help what the daughter was any more than he could help having a son a common truck-driver; and there I dropped it."

"He didn't mean it," declared Billy. "He likes you and admires you, and you will find him out when I once break this spell that is over him. As for being a truck-driver, that's honest, and many a driver is a king beside some men of means this city might show up."

"Maybe so. But, you said I could help you; what do ye want me to do?"

"I want you to be on hand to-night when this thing is unmasked, and the rascals are shown up. Can you manage it?"

"Maybe so, if you'll post me a bit."

That Billy could do, and did do. If he had once suspected this man, he now saw he had been wrong in doing so, and wanted to make amends for it.

When they parted it was with the understanding that Jonas was to be at Madame Dubarre's seance that evening, in disguise if he could adopt one, and that he was to take some part in the business.

Billy took his leave, and set out for the residence of the female shark.

The chief had assured him that his disguise was almost perfection, so he was not afraid to venture there.

A girl answered his ring at the bell, and he asked to see Madam Dubarre.

Madam Dubarre, by the way, was a woman who, besides her spiritualism trade, advertised as a seer, one who could read the past, present and future like an open book; and all that.

"What do you want, sir?" the girl asked.

"I want to consult with the great Egyptian oracle," Billy answered.

"You want a private interview?"

"Yes, strictly private."

"Very well; come to this room and I will inform the madam."

Billy was shown into a small room on the right of the hall, and the girl shut him in and disappeared.

Presently Rosa Dubarre entered.

"You desire to see me, sir?" she asked.

"Yes, if you are the Egyptian oracle."

"I am, sir."

"I want some information."

"Of what nature, sir?"

"I want to find a missing person."

"Very well; that may be very simple. My fee, you know, is five dollars."

"Here is the money."

"Now, tell me the circumstances, sir."

"Well, I have a boy who has run away from home, and I want to find him. He is ten years old. I am from up in the State, you know."

"What place are you from?"

"Sand Hills."

"Very well; I will ask the stars. You remain perfectly still and perfectly passive while I fall asleep, and in my sleep I will talk."

The woman laid her head back, closed her eyes, and was motionless.

Presently she began to talk.

"I see a boy," she began, "and he is leaving home by stealth. I see him again. He is in a city, and I know it to be New York. I see him again he is on the cars. The train moves West. I see him again in the city as before. It is Chicago."

She said no more, and presently came out of the sleep.

"Have I told anything?" she asked.

"Yes, you say he is in Chicago."

"Well, it must be so, then. Remember, I have no knowledge of what has been said by my lips. I did not speak, but the oracle within."

"All right," assented Billy. "To Chicago I go. But, you are a spiritualist, are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you have meetings here sometimes?"

"Yes, sir. There is to be a grand seance here to-night. Would you like to attend?"

"Yes, for I am greatly interested in such things, although not quite a spiritualist myself. What is the price of admission? How must I apply?"

"The admission is five dollars, except to members of the faith. You simply come here at the hour, eight, and pay your fee and enter, that is all. I think you will go away greatly benefited."

"Well, maybe I will call, if I have time. I certainly will if I make up my mind not to go away to-night."

Billy had got all the information he wanted, and prepared to leave.

He was not detained, the woman seeming as ready to have him go as he was to depart, and he opened the door and stepped out into the hall.

"Shine, sir! Shine?"

Billy stopped short and stared at the boy.

What was Happy Harry doing there? How had he gained entrance? Billy was at a loss to know.

"Why, Bob!" exclaimed the woman, stepping out right behind Billy. "What do you mean by this? This is no place to ply your trade! What do you mean by it?"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GRAND SWOOP MADE.

BROADWAY BILLY had already given Happy Harry their secret sign, letting him know who he was.

Harry promptly made response to the woman's demands.

"Nothin', ma'm, only I thought I'd combine business with pleasure, that's all. Shine, sir? Make 'em look so slick you'll be proud of 'em. Make it half price ter you, too, seein' that I'm a fixture in this 'stablishment."

"Bob!" the woman cried in anger. "Shut right up this moment and go back in the room there. I am surprised at you!"

"Really, I do not care if he does black my shoes," assured Billy. "They need it bad enough. If you will allow him to do it I will consider it a favor. I never could bear the idea of having it done outside where everybody gapes at me."

"Oh, well, I don't care; but you must go down to the next floor and do it. I will have no more of this, Bob, and you must understand it."

"No need ter go down there, fer I could black forty pairs here and never get a spot on the carpet."

"Well, do it, then, and be quick," cried the woman.

She stood by to watch the operation, and Harry fell-to with a will.

One shoe was quickly done, and Billy raised his foot for the other. Just as Harry rolled up the leg of his trousers Billy felt the lad slip something into the top of his shoe.

The work was soon finished, Billy tossed the boy a dime, and then with thanks to Madam Dubarre, took his leave.

"Sweet pertaters!" he muttered, when clear of the house, "that young cub is better than I ever thought of being. He can give me odds and leave me away behind, I really believe. What was it he put in my shoe? Can't look now, but will as soon as I get around the corner. I used to think I was pretty fly, but I guess the rising generation can give me some points, and the delegate of them all is this same Happy Harry."

Billy was soon around the corner, where he stooped and drew a folded piece of paper from the top of his shoe.

Opening it he read:

"Boss:-

"I'mbettin' it's you, fer I think I know yer voice, and I write this to put in yer shoe if you give me the sine and I get the chance. If it ain't you, you won't see this and no harm done. I am here as big as life. I'm 'gaged fer the first act to-night. I'm to play roots on old man Rundle. Don't you l-t on, but if you don't see a circus here you kin lick me. I'll tell ye all about it later on when I kin orate. I have had a streak of luck as wide as the Boulevard."

HAPPY HARRY."

Billy laughed heartily.

"The young rat!" he exclaimed. "How has he ever managed to get a footing in that house? It is more than I can guess. It was high time I reached twenty-one and retired from business as a boy detective, for I would stand no show with this fellow. Ha, ha, ha! Well, well, this beats me all hollow, and no mistake. He calls it luck, too, but I know better'n that, fer luck don't drop onto a fellow like a fortune from a rich daddy. I don't know any such word as luck. The only luck I know anything about is the luck that hard work brings."

At the appointed hour that evening Billy met Gus Casmore, and together they went up to the woman's house, after a supper together at a restaurant at Billy's expense.

Billy was let to know that the usual fee was five dollars, but owing to his coming with Casmore, he was allowed to enter free. The woman conducted them to the rear parlor, where she had just been giving Happy Harry his finishing lesson before the opening of the meeting proper.

It was near the hour, and persons were gathering in the front room.

"This boy," said Casmore, "is one that was picked up to-day on the street, and Madam Dubarre says he is the most wonderful medium she ever saw."

"Possible?"

"Yes. I believe he could tell you your name, where you are from, and all you want to know. And you can swear he never saw you before, of course. He surprised me, I tell you."

"Wonderful!"

"I would show you," said the woman, "but it is near time for the seance, and it might spoil him for that to throw him into a trance now."

"I don't believe it would," spoke up Harry himself. "I feel wonderful like goin' off now, and mebby if you send me off I'll be better able ter keep awake when ye want me to."

"Is that so?"

"Sure thing! It acts that way sometimes."

"Well, if that is the case I will mesmerize you and you can answer some questions for this gentleman."

She passed her hand before the lad's face a few times, and he was gone.

"Now, sir," she said to Billy, "ask him anything you wish, and my word for it be will astound you. Ask him something which you are sure he can have no knowledge about."

"What is my name?" Billy asked, loudly.

He knew Harry would know to answer, if his memory was any good at all, for he had told him everything at dinner that day.

"Your name is William Weston," came the answer, in slow, deliberate words.

"Where am I from?" the next query.

"From Bucks county, Pennsylvania. You have come to New York to see the sights and have fun."

"What did I tell you?" demanded Casmore.

"Pshaw!" Billy exclaimed, "you told him all that, Mr. Casmore."

"On my oath I did not!" the rascal protested.

"He told me things just as wonderful, and Madam Dubarre, too."

"It is so," the woman affirmed.

"Everything is all right," Harry spoke again. "Everything is all right. Everything is all right."

"What in the world does he mean?" cried Casmore and the woman together, as they looked at each other.

Broadway Billy knew well what he meant. He knew this was especially directed to him.

"Why, he assures us that everything is all right," Billy repeated.

At that moment Harry came to, and sat up rubbing his eyes as before, asking what he had been saying.

"You have assured us that everything is all right, whatever that means," the woman said, laughing.

"Then it must be so," declared Harry. "My spook never tells lies."

Casmore now conducted Billy out into the other room, where quite a company was assembled, and among them Matthias Rundle, Jonas Rundle, and some others whom Billy had used for.

Presently the great Dubarre entered the room and made her little speech. She requested the company to draw their chairs up in a circle, to take hold of hands every one with those nearest, and to remain in that position while she turned out the gas. And she assured them there was no danger.

This was done, and the room was darkened.

"Now," the voice of the managing medium spoke, "spiritual manifestations will soon begin to be heard and felt. Do not be alarmed. Nothing will harm. It is my hope that the spirits may be with us in power on this occasion. Now, silence all and keep tight hold of hands all around the circle."

There was an interval of silence; then strange sounds began to be heard. There were whispers, moans, sighs; then followed the tinkle of musical instruments in the air above the heads of the circle. These increased, until, finally, vague flashes of light appeared here and there, and these were succeeded by the appearance of ghostly forms here and there for a moment at a time.

"Wonderful!" cried one believer, unable to control his tongue longer.

Immediately there was a grand ending to everything, and no more sights or sounds were heard.

"You have spoiled it all by speaking," spoke the voice of the great Dubarre. "Some minutes must now pass before the reappearance of our dear departed ones. I will light the gas again, and then prepare for other manifestations."

The gas was lighted, and the circle winked and blinked at one another in the blinding glare.

For an hour there was a great performance, the woman showing all manner of impossible doings, declaring the spirits to be in full possession of the house, and at last she made mention of her new discovery, a boy of the street who was the most wonderful medium she had ever met with.

At a signal from her Happy Harry was led into the room, by the servant.

He was cool and easy in manner, and gave a queer blink at Billy as he took his place in a chair in the center of the circle.

Billy had plans of his own, but had decided not to put them into operation until he learned what Harry was going to do, or what was going to be done with him. He felt that he could trust the boy fully.

The woman made a long speech, in which she dwelt upon the mysteries so little understood; the near ties that bound the living to the dead—the mortal to the immortal; and a good deal more in that occult line, and finally came down to the subject in hand.

"And now," she concluded, "I will command this boy to sleep, and he will immediately be in condition to communicate between the material and the immaterial. See; I speak! He is gone!"

She had spoken, and Harry dropped back in his chair, staring straight ahead.

Broadway Billy looked on with keenest interest, wondering what it meant, and how it was coming out.

"Now," the woman went on, "the spirit of this boy is out of the body. As soon as it is gone, another spirit takes its place; the boy will speak. Now, silence all."

All were silent, and presently Harry spoke.

"Father?" he called.

The woman raised a finger to prevent others from speaking, and asked:

"Who is it that speaks?"

"I am Betty Rundle," was the answer. "I want my father!"

Billy looked over toward the old man, and saw that he was trembling, and that his face was pale.

"Can you prove that you are Betty Rundle?" the woman asked. "Give some proof that your father will positively be able to recognize."

"Father," spoke Harry's lips, "do you not remember the present you gave me on my tenth birthday? The ring I was so proud of? It had two pretty red stones in it, and I lost it."

"It's so!" cried Rundle. "It's so! It's so!"

"Then you recognize me?" asked the spirit using Harry's body.

"Yes, my child! Yes, yes!"

"Then pay close attention to what I say now: You are going to die, some time, but maybe not very soon. These swindlers are playing for your money. This woman—"

Madam Dubarre made a rush at the medium, as did also Gus Casmore, but Broadway Billy and the others sprung up and held them back.

"This woman," the spirit went on, "is a fraud, and she has been bleedin' you fer all you are worth, and more too. This night she intended to make you give her all your money, but her little game is nipp'd in the bud, and— Crackers an' cheese! I'm the gentle kiss-me-quick that had a hand in it. Whoop! 'Rah fer our side!"

The seance had broken up in confusion. Rosa Dubarre, Gus Casmore, and their deluded followers, were making the greatest kind of ado, but the detective and his helpers had the two arch crooks handcuffed before they could escape, as they at once endeavored to do, and the Shadow Chase was ended. Broadway Billy had materialized the spooks, and Happy Harry celebrated it by dancing a war-dance over the result.

The doors were locked, and a thorough search was made of the house. The will of Matthias Rundle was found, together with a private diary that had been kept by his daughter, and out of which the woman Dubarre had learned

so many events of her life as to enable her to carry on such a deception. It was an exposure complete, and the faith of the spiritualists present received a shock from which it never recovered.

Billy, duly armed with warrants, held fast to his prisoners, while all the others were held as witnesses, and were taken to the house of detention. A policeman was left in charge of the place. The woman who was acting as house-keeper for Mr. Rundle was next arrested and sent to join the others. Broadway Billy had all the proof needed, and more, and when the case came to a hearing the guilty ones were sent down to await the trial that was sure to terminate in their being sent up—up instead of down—and for a considerable period, too.

Billy received the congratulations of his patron, and Happy Harry came in for the approval of his chief. Billy could not praise Harry enough, and could not get over the splendid start he had made. He told more than one person about it, and declared that Happy Harry was destined to make a greater record by far than he had made himself as a boy. Harry took it all with modest mien, declaring it had been nothing but dumb luck, but Billy would not allow that to be said of it.

Mr. Rundle was cured completely, and his will was made stronger than ever in favor of his son.

Of course, the young detective was handsomely rewarded, and he immediately put a "nest egg" to the credit of Happy Harry in one of the city banks.

Some days later Billy met with a surprise at home. His mother, standing with one arm of the old ranger, Roger Watts, around her when Billy opened the door, informed him that she and Roger had been married that day, and that Roger had changed his mind about going up to his home in the northern part of the State, where he had now no friends, and had made up his mind to spend the rest of his days with the boy he had learned to like so well. And all Billy was able to say, at first, was—"Sweet pertaters!" Billy declared that his birthday had been a glorious event, but now he hardly knew which pleased him most, that or this. He had learned to love the honest, brave old man, and it was an arrangement that suited him exactly.

Billy is in the harness now in earnest, and, with happy Harry as his adjutant, is bound to do some signal work in his line.

THE END.

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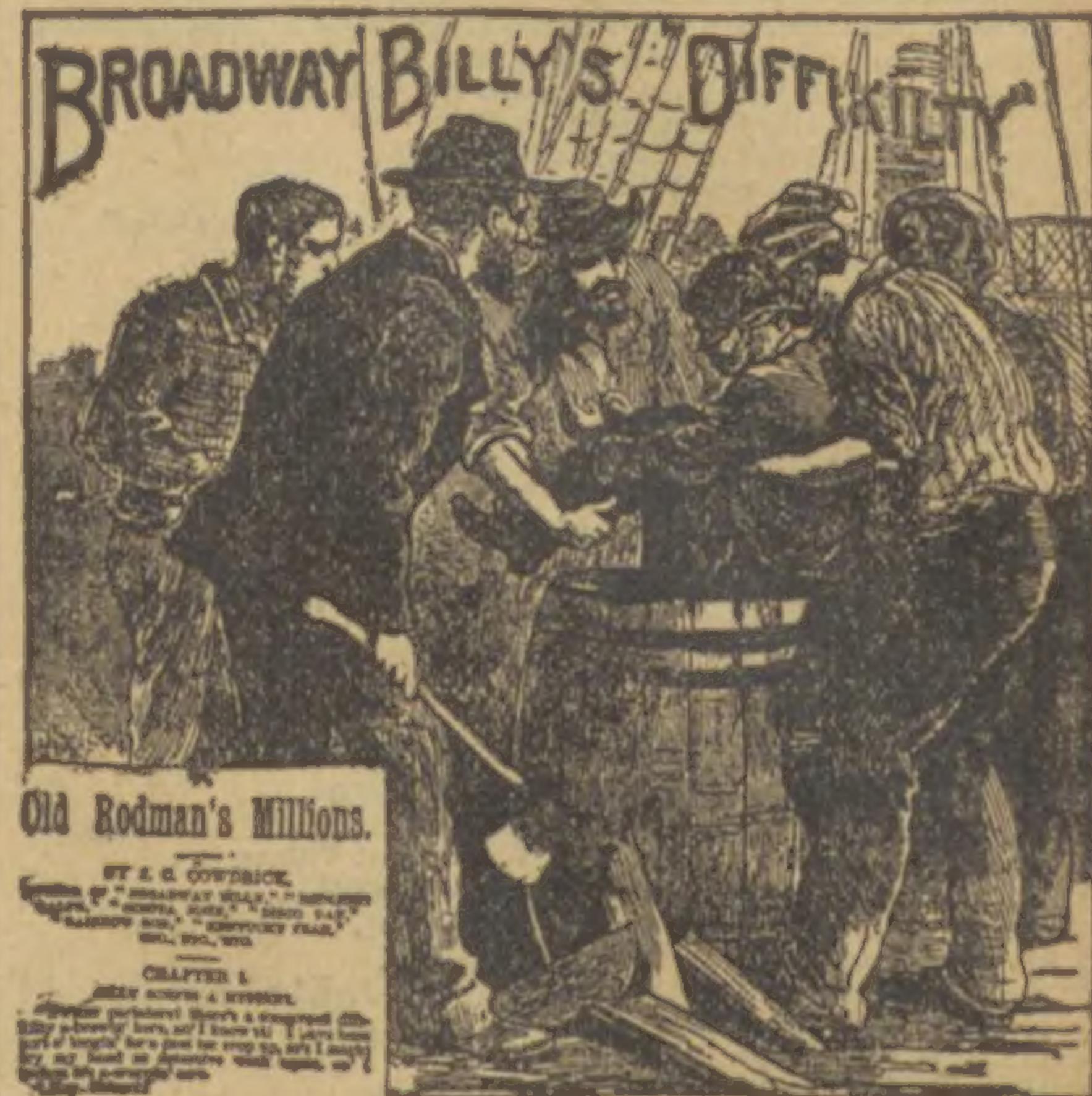


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